



THE
GATE OF
FAREWELL

ALLAN
HAWKWOOD

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From grandma and
uncle Chas.

The Gate of Farewell

4th Aug 1928.

The Gate of Farewell

By ALLAN HAWKWOOD - *Author of*
"Solomon's Quest," "John Solomon, Supercargo." - -



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The Gate of Farewell

CHAPTER I

WHEREIN A GROCER HIRES A CAPTAIN

“Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,
Where there ain’t no ten commandments, an’ a man can raise a thir—”

“Stow that noise, you swine!”

The three seamen in the corner settle of the “Jolly Admiral” who had been howling forth the words in all the bravado of shore-leave and liquor suddenly shivered and leaned over their beer, cowed into silence by the voice.

Yet it had not been loud, nor was the speaker so ferocious in appearance—a man five feet six, wrapped in a big ulster, who went on talking quietly to the barmaid while the fingers of one hand abstractedly tapped on the rounded edge of the bar.

The only other occupants of the “Jolly Admiral’s” taproom that wet night were two men seated across a table. One of them chuckled softly, watching the man who had first spoken.

“Mind his fingers, Tredgar—Morse code!”

Sure enough, the fingers were tapping out one word over and over. The tall man addressed as Tredgar nodded, then rose and stepped toward the bar.

“I’m sorry, sir,” the barmaid was saying with unwonted respect, “but ’e’s not been ’ere yet, sir, an’ ’e didn’t sye nothink this mornin’ abaht comin’ back, sir.”

“Curse—beg pardon, miss; never swear before a lady, never. When he comes back you can tell him from me that I’ll rot the length of Regent’s Docks before I’d sign on with a swab-eyed beggar who can’t keep an appointment, by scrag!”

As the little man whirled, Tredgar looked into his face for the first time, and knew instantly why the three seamen had shrunk into silence.

“Well? I take it you’re looking at me, sir?”

“Correct—I am. You’re Captain Hugh Cairn?”

“So my certificate reads. May I ask——”

“Step into the back room, captain, and you may ask whatever you like.”

Tredgar nodded to the barmaid, his companion joined him, and after very evident hesitation Captain Cairn followed them into the private room.

Flinging off his coat, Tredgar revealed a rangy figure, with lean hatchet-face, sandy curly hair, and a hard jaw which the sailor eyed with approval.

Cairn himself was older, black of hair, and shaggy of eyebrow, with light-grey eyes set like cold stones beneath the overhanging black bars of brow—a feature that gave his naturally truculent face a bizarre, almost uncanny, expression.

The younger man broke silence.

“My name is Tredgar, Allan Tredgar, and I want to know if you’d consider the command of a small yacht for a cruise somewhere past Port Said?”

“After being idle in Liverpool two months,” came the bitter reply, “I’d consider the command of a gigger-rigged trawler for a cruise on the brimstone lake—ah! May I take that as a definite offer, Mr. Tredgar? Thank you—back in just a moment.”

The little captain bolted through the door just as Tredgar heard a cold authoritative voice ask for Captain Cairn. The latter’s reply came clearly from the taproom, for he had left the door open behind him.

“So it’s you, Colonel Lionel Parrish? I’ve waited here for half an hour, sir, and I’d have ye know that it was just thirty minutes too long. You and your ship can go to the deuce for all o’ me, and I wish ye luck in the going.”

The other laughed lightly and cynically.

“Bit of a fire-eater, isn’t he, Sloog? Now, captain, don’t fly off the handle this way. I want you, and I generally get what I want, so if you please we’ll talk terms.”

“I’ve had my say,” snapped out the captain. “You and your murderin’ friend won’t talk terms with me. As for you, Jerry Sloog, I think ye’ve met me before—don’t grin at me, ye scut! Ah, I thought ye’d change your tune. I’ll bid ye good night, Colonel Parrish.”

A moment later Cairn re-entered the private room, and after the mugs of stout had been disposed

about the table and the door shut he burst forth in abrupt explosion:

“Darn these American brutes! They needn’t think they can come it over me with their arrogant ways and their money and their stiff bit o’ talk—not for ten quid a day, by scrag!”

Tredgar smiled.

“Sorry to hear that, Captain Cairn. You see, I’m an American myself!”

The little captain’s jaw fell, and he stared blankly at the other; then his eyes went to the second man, and Tredgar caught the look.

“This is Lieutenant Krogness, R.N., a friend of mine who recommended you and brought me around here to-night to meet you.”

Krogness, square-faced and square-jawed held out a hand; but Cairn skipped back nimbly from his seat, hands in his jacket-pockets.

“So you an’ your admiralty know where to find me, do they? I’m not aware of having furnished my address, Lieutenant Krogness, and I’d thank you to explain.”

Krogness grinned in his slow fashion.

“You’re too good a fighting man to remain out of sight, captain—especially since you ran that cargo of stores into Janina through the Greeks. When my friend Tredgar, here, said that he wanted a man, and what he wanted him for, I brought him to you. It’s a chance to run into trouble on the right side of the wall this time. No dodging gun-boats and cruisers!”

“Jolly lot I care for that!” sniffed the other,

but he put out a hand and resumed his seat, nevertheless. "Your pardon, sir, Mr. Tredgar, I withdraw my objections to Americans—in this case."

"You won't run me into any international complications, then—won't scrap with gunboats or anything like that?" chuckled Tredgar.

"Lord bless ye, sir, I'm no fighter!"

The others broke into a roar of laughter. For an instant Cairn's jaw clamped hard, then he leaned forward earnestly.

"Look'ee, sir, I can fight when needful, I trust. But I've had no real fist-fight these five years back. Now, ye're something of a handy man with your fists, I take it——"

"Whoa!" and Tredgar roared again. "Not I, man—I've never had a fight in my life, barring accidents! I'm a grocer."

Once more the seaman's jaw fell, this time in open disbelief.

"Then ye have a deceiving face," he rejoined slowly. Krogness broke in, smiling.

"Right-o, captain! He's been the representative, here in Liverpool, of an American importing firm for the past two years, and I've always said he'd missed his profession. Allan, you'd better have the whole thing out and let Captain Cairn take or leave. By the way, since we heard who your visitor was, I might say that it's a good thing for you that you turned Parrish down. He's a rank adventurer——"

"Soldier of fortune, he calls himself—wanted me to handle one of his dirty-eyed nigger crews. But slick—my eye, he's that slick your admiralty will

have all they want to watch him! Now, Mr. Tredgar, I like ye fine, but I'll have no sailin' under false colours, nor will I sign on to bully men, for I'm no bally prize-fighter.

"I'll tell ye plain that I have bad luck; yes, by scraggs, if I took a coal-barge across Channel I'd have a submersible after me in ten minutes, but that's none o' my fault. If you want a thing done, I'll do it, though I smashed owners doing it, and more I can't say."

"Entirely satisfactory, captain," smiled the American; then his face went grave and he lowered his voice, looking squarely into those erratic but unwinking grey eyes.

"As I said, I'm a grocer, plain and simple. But last Monday I chartered a small yacht, nine hundred tons, and threw up business for a year, though I trust we shan't be gone so long, and now I'm anxious to be off."

"Aye," the little sailor nodded wisely when he had drained his mug, "grocer ye may be, but not at heart. I understand, I do, and I think the more o' ye for wantin' to be away from the grimy city and——"

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Tredgar, then laughed through his irritation. "I tell you I'm no adventurer! I'd sooner be at home riding in a taxi than anywhere else; there's no fun in wearing your body to the bone, man, and fighting doesn't appeal to me——"

"I think ye said ye'd never fought?"

"Nor have I. Why?"

“Then wait a bit till ye do,” and Cairn chuckled to himself, an appreciative eye on the grocer’s rugged chin and level stare. “Not that I like it myself, but it’s necessary at times,” he added hastily.

“Listen, Mr. Tredgar: I was o’ the same mind as you be when I was a little tad, for my father was a Scotch minister out o’ Glasgow and my mother was a Salvationer—but the first voyage took it out o’ me, when I ran away to ship on a barque takin’ rails up the coast.

“Third night out it was, with a heavy sea and somethin’ busted loose below, that the mate gets the hatch off and orders me down into that hell-hole of a hold. When I hesitated he swiped me in the face, with his fist. I went over the coamin’, and dropped. The hour I got my liberty, Mr. Tredgar, I licked that mate, and I went on lickin’ till I got my master’s ticket—but Lord! I clear forgot we were talkin’ business! Haul ahead, sir, and I’ll stand by.”

“It’s a short tale, captain. I have an older brother, or I had, five years ago. He was in business in New York, importing curios and art objects for rich collectors. Five years ago he got on the track of something big, though he never told a soul what it was, out in Africa somewhere, and went out himself to see about it. He never came back, though some of his papers did, with a report that he had died near Aden of fever. Naturally, I accepted this report as correct until last week.”

Tredgar took a ring from his finger and held it

out, the hatchet-lines of his face suddenly accentuated, his strong teeth flashing in what was very like a snarl.

“Last week, Captain Cairn, a man came into the office to see me about a shipment of dates. He was wearing this ring, one that I had given Bob years ago—a seal, with no chance for a mistake. Well, this chap had bought the ring from an Arab trading-dhow master at Port Said a year before. Take a look inside it.”

Cairn obeyed, and frowned over a scratch seemingly of no import.

“That scratch, captain, is either absolutely meaningless or else it’s composed of two letters of the stenographic alphabet, l and p, which would mean ‘help’, if anything, in this connection. Now, there is no Red Sea consular report on my brother’s death, and that ring gave me a hunch. I looked up Krogness, we got hold of a neat little steam-yacht, and I’m going to take a chance on finding some trace of Bob. He wasn’t the kind of chap to drop out of everything that way.”

“Hardly—not if he had your jaw. Was he like you, sir?”

“Eh? Why yes—Bob was just an ordinary American business man, captain. We were a good deal alike, though he was four years older than I.”

Cairn leaned back, nodding. “It’s little enough to go on, Mr. Tredgar, sir, but I’m pretty familiar with that bally coast from Alexandria to Durban, and a man havin’ your general trend o’ face might stumble on to anything, so to speak. D’ye mind what Schopenhauer says about the predestin—”

“Schopenhauer!” exclaimed the American. “Do you mean to say you read stuff like that?”

Tredgar knew instantly that he had offended Cairn in a mortal point, for the grey eyes lit and flamed, and the long nostrils quivered.

“Well, sir, an’ why not? Is it beyond your comprehension that a man should follow the sea and still improve his mind? I’d have ye know, sir, that I’ve studied Schopenhauer and read Kant—though I can’t say but what he would have learned a lot if he’d put in a year before the mast on a wind-jammer—and just at present I’ve taken up this Frenchy, Bergson. No, by scrags, I don’t lay claim to being a gentleman, but I know more than how to take a tinpot of a junked oiler down the coast!”

The eyes of the two men met, and as neither wavered, the negotiations threatened to come to an abrupt and startling close when Krogness interfered.

“Here, this won’t do. With all due respect, captain, Schopenhauer isn’t worth having a bally row over. Discuss something worth while—such as Parrish. What has our gallant friend on the dais now?”

“I’m no spy!” snapped Cairn with asperity, shifting the storm centre instantly. “Find that out for yourself!”

“Who is this Colonel Parrish, anyway?” Tredgar looked from one to the other in an effort to change the topic. Swallowing his irritation, Krogness replied:

“A man of iron, Allan—a soldier of fortune who

knows neither fear nor pity. He's an American, first heard of when he led the Riffians against French and Spanish in Morocco. He next appeared over on the east coast and had a hand in those mysterious revolts in Arabia a few years back.

"If you're up on your inside history, you'll know that only one thing kept Italy out of the Tripoli hinterland, and that same thing is putting the fear of God into our Egyptian government; I firmly believe that Lionel Parrish is the agent of this thing. He appeared openly at Adrianople, and not till he was badly wounded did the Ottoman lines crumple ——"

"Well, what's the answer?" demanded Tredgar. "Who's he agent for, anyhow? I'm not up on your inside history."

"Agent is the wrong word. Rather, I should say *Mokkhadem*, or perfect. Unless I'm very much mistaken, he is the only white man who can claim knowledge of, and brotherhood with, the Grand Master of the Order——"

"Stop!" Cairn's fist crashed down on the table and his voice was like living vitriol. "Twenty miles o' sea room and a closed cabin when you talk of *that*, lieutenant! If you're set on discussing it, I'll be on my way. By scraggs, I've no ambition to wake up with a knife in my gizzard by Mohammed's compliments!"

Somewhat surprised by the earnest manner of the sailor, and without special interest in the subject, Tredgar shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of dismissal.

"Oh, very well—it's aside from the question in

hand, anyway. Now, captain, the *Spindrift* is lying all ready for crew and stores; when can you take her in hand? Here is my card, and if you'll drop around to the office we'll get the paper in shape to-morrow."

"Very good, sir. I'll be on deck in the morning. You've no more definite idea as to where we're going than you said?"

"Not the slightest—except that it will probably be somewhere east of Suez."

"Then, frankly, it's a wild-goose chase, sir; but we'll do our best to get hold of something. I'll have a crew in two days—a real crew, by scrag—none of your lascars and sou'easters! We'll sign articles in the morning, then?"

"In the morning."

All three men slipped into their coats without further parley, quietly shook hands, and repaired to the taproom, which was empty save for the three sailors in the corner, and these paid them no heed.

Captain Cairn stood looking after his two visitors and turned to the barmaid with confidence that no echo of intelligence could be wakened in her mind.

"A drop o' bitter, my dear. So the grocer is coming to school along o' Hugh Cairn, eh? A sweet time he'll have of it then, for it's no kindergarten he's come to!"

With which utterance the gallant captain saluted the barmaid respectfully, paid for his drink, and vanished forth into the night.

Oddly enough, the three seamen in the corner bestirred themselves immediately, and also vanished into the drizzly darkness outside, and the "Jolly

Admiral" gave no hint that it had assisted in the affairs of empire.

So chance wove her rope of sand nor recked the value of a smile. For Hugh Cairn, being of a terrible earnestness, smiled sometimes with his eyes, but never with his lips; Lionel Parrish smiled often with his lips, but never with his eyes; while Allan Tredgar's lean face was wont to relax often and completely, for this American was one who flung himself against the world whole-heartedly and gave as he took—of the uttermost and best.

CHAPTER II

THE ROAD TO SUEZ

Captain Hugh Cairn rubbed one very yellow eye with exceeding great tenderness and cast a vicious glance from the other toward the Rock sweeping up into the sky astern of the *Spindrift*.

“Bally lot o’ good it does being a British subject!” he growled to Tredgar, who stood beside him in the chart-house. “If that had happened in Havre or Bremen or Algiers, now, there’d be some tall apologizing; but a lot I’d get back there!”

“They know you too well,” laughed the American easily, though he was careful not to look too hard at the eye which was rapidly growing black. “What did he light into you for? All I saw as I came up was a brown man going over the side.”

“Yes, he went, right enough. Came alongside in a launch, mind you—why, he was no more a lascar than I am! I had the anchor up and didn’t know he was aboard till Parks sang out. The dirty heathen started to jabber, and I ordered him over the side, and as he didn’t jump fast enough to suit me I helped him.

“He reached out and gave me his regards first, by scrag! then I jumped him and dropped him into the wash. Now, sir, run a line between that lateen-rigged felucca and the P. and O. back yonder—catch her?”

“Catch what? You don’t mean that grey tramp with the black funnels?”

“Aye, but I do! Why that beggar wanted to have a look at us I don’t know; but I can tell a Moor from a lascar with half an eye, and I’d bet my ticket against a tuppenny bit that our lascar friend is aboard her now. Ho, Mr. Parks. Come up here and take the bridge!”

“But why aboard her?” queried the puzzled Tredgar, watching the harmless-looking tramp which flew the Union Jack and was just clearing the port.

“Because she’s the ship Parrish wanted me to take command of.”

At this instant Parks, the first mate, ran up with a sly grin at Cairn’s eye, and the truculent skipper was not slow to observe it.

“I ordered you to take the bridge, Mr. Parks,” he added in his iciest tone. “When I ask you to entertain us by making silly faces ye’ll do it, and not before. What’s that ye’ve got there?”

“Letter, sir. The lascar who gave you—who boarded us, sir, dropped it, and I was just fetching it when you called.”

An excessively sobered mate held out a scrap of paper, which Cairn seized and read, then held out to Tredgar.

“Run your eye over this, Mr. Tredgar. I’ll get a slice o’ beef from the steward and be back to explain. Mr. Mate, see if you can keep this floating junk-heap from running down that lousy fruiter on the port bow while I’m below.”

Cairn vanished to attend to his battered eye,

and Parks cast a grave but eloquent wink at the American. Tredgar glanced at the note, which was very neatly written:

CAPTAIN HUGH CAIRN, S.S. *Spindrifft*.

MY DEAR CAPTAIN:

From what I can find out, you seem determined to tread on my toes, which would be unpleasant for us both. I would beg to suggest that you confine your activities to the Mediterranean on the present cruise. *Verbum sap.*

Yours very truly,

LIONEL PARRISH.

Immediately beneath the signature was an intricate tracery, which to the inexperienced eye of Tredgar seemed to be Arabic. He smiled at the letter, then tossed it on the chart-table and leaned back comfortably to fill his pipe.

“This fellow Parrish seems to keep cases on the skipper,” he mused. “I’ll have to bind them over to keep the peace, at this rate.”

He attached no importance whatever to Parrish’s letter, nor did he pretend to understand it. In fact, he was perfectly contented with his present existence and was not anxious for more troublous affairs until the time came.

And the time would not come, he had decided, until the *Spindrifft* had passed Suez; wherein Allan Tredgar reckoned without his skipper, to say nothing of Colonel Lionel Parrish.

Krogness had proven an invaluable aid in many ways, and after Captain Cairn took hold, everything

moved like clockwork, for the little seaman was an autocrat on his own quarter-deck.

Tredgar placed all things in his hands with absolute confidence, for the American was as ignorant as a child of all connected with the sea. He was a business man to his finger-tips, and once out of the realm of finance his self-confidence evaporated quickly; but he was rapidly adjusting himself to his new environment, and Cairn was a good tutor.

The crew had been assembled before Krogness left to rejoin his ship, and the naval officer had voiced unqualified approval of Cairn's choice in the way of men. Joe Parks, the first officer, was a lanky, hard-bitten New Zealander who loved nothing better than to bait the skipper and play with fire for the sheer fun of it; Monty Dobbins, the second mate, hailed from New England, and never said a word that could be expressed by a gesture, while every other man on board, from firemen to deck-hands, was British born and bred, with the exception of Durant, the American chief engineer.

As Cairn had said, "there's a heap o' difference between British subjects and British men, and the Lord preserve us from the first named!"

"I guess that man was no lascar, or he'd never have struck back," thought Tredgar, reflecting on the late untimely incident. "Just why Parrish is worried over the *Spindrift* I can't see, but we've probably heard the last of him."

A moment later Captain Cairn appeared with a huge and gory bandage hiding his injured optic from view. He glanced at the letter and at Parks, but the mate kept his gaze discreetly away from the

bandage, and with a little sigh the skipper stepped to the bell and rang for slow speed.

“Call all hands, Mr. Parks. Mr. Tredgar, ye’ll kindly step out here to the bridge—not that your authority is necessary, but to lend emphasis, as it were.”

Wondering what was up, Tredgar rose and joined Cairn at the bridge-deck rail. The crew assembled on the deck below, and at sight of the covert grins the temper of the little skipper was no whit improved.

“I have a few words to say to you men,” he remarked. “You’re Britishers—though I must say ye show ugly enough mugs—so ye can be trusted so some extent. Mr. Durant, ye have that box o’ rifles and ammunition? Very good.”

At this amazing speech the men stiffened into silence. Tredgar, who knew nothing of rifles being aboard, frowned slightly.

“We may have a bit o’ trouble, and again we may not. You men saw me put that heathen over the rail half an hour ago, and if we do have trouble it’ll be with a gang of Mohammedans like him.

“Now ye know where the rifles are, and if ye don’t know how to use ’em when the time comes the Lord have mercy on ye! You’ll serve out the rifles at my order only, Mr. Durant—but see to it that you serve ’em blasted quick when I order it. That’s all, men.”

Curtly dismissing Parks amid the cheers that came from below, Cairn led the American back into the chart-house and calmly lit a cheroot.

“Explanations, please,” said Tredgar quietly.

“I suppose you know what such a step as this means, captain?”

“I suppose *you* know what that letter means?” retorted the other acidly, pointing at the note on the table. “Then I’ll tell ye, Mr. Tredgar. It means hell for the *Spindrifft*, that’s what!”

The American pulled at his pipe, surveying the speaker quizzically. Despite his truculent air and his evident readiness to back it up substantially, Captain Cairn was rather absurd, he considered.

To be sure, the *Spindrifft* was a small and out-worn enough yacht, graduated through old age from the Cowes class; but the ministering tongue of the skipper had made her shine anew on the voyage down, and Tredgar, having blissful confidence in the power of the flag and the authority of international law, invoked these gods of the tourist with great self-satisfaction.

Cairn listened, his grim brows shielding the stony-grey eyes almost from sight, and when he replied it was very patiently, as though he argued with a child.

“Did Lieutenant Krogness say any more about me, sir? Did he finish what he started to tell ye about Parrish that night?”

“Why—by George, no! I’d forgotten all about that. As for you, he merely said that I’d find out about you soon enough, though he’d recommend you to the limit.”

“H-m! Well, I fancy I have a bit of a reputation, after a fashion. I was doing a bit of supplies and gun-running for the Turks last winter, Mr. Tredgar, when Parrish and I got acquainted. Not that I

love the Turks, but their money is highly useful, y'understand. Now, Colonel Parrish is a soldier, and a fine one; but that's all I'd say for him. He's a Mohammedan, sir, pure and simple. Now, just cast an eye over this."

The skipper pulled out a pocket volume of Bergson and extracted a faded clipping in French. Tredgar took it and found it to be a mere paragraph:

The editor announces that he has secured startling revelations as to the sacred city of Jof, well known by reputation. These, together with an account of the grand master of the Senussiyeh and his factory of arms and ammunition, will appear next week by approval of the government.

"I clipped that out of a paper in Tunis," stated Cairn, carefully replacing the fragment. "The editor died mysteriously an hour after the paper reached the streets. No trace was ever found of the revelations in question."

"What about it?" laughed the American. "What's that got to do with us and with Parrish? What's the Senussiyeh, anyway?"

"An order—monastic and militant order. Jof's a city five hundred miles south of Tripoli, and no white man ever got in and out again. It's the most powerful secret society in the world, Mr. Tredgar—why, only a few years ago the grand master summoned the Khedive, and made the beggar come to him, by scrag!

"The Frenchies and Italians are scared stiff, while our men in Egypt simply sleep with their weapons handy. That's what Colonel Lionel Parrish is in with, blast his dirty soul!"

Tredgar, astounded, plied the skipper with questions; but it appeared that Cairn knew little more of Parrish than he had already said. As he told of the ten million members of the Senussiye, of the depots of war material at Jof, of the grand master's secret-service corps, and the young Moslems sent to study at the best schools in Europe—all of which was not rumour, but solid fact—Tredgar's amazement grew, but with it grew his incredulity that an American could hold service in such an order.

And when he finally pressed Cairn for proof that Parrish was implicated in the Senussiye the little skipper had none to offer beyond his innate hatred of Parrish and a few trivial incidents.

"Nonsense!" concluded the American at last. "Frankly, captain, I think you lay too much stress on all this. The Senussiye may be a fact, but that Colonel Parrish could be connected with it is highly improbable, even had he turned Moslem, which I refuse to believe. You know what his present game is, I suppose?"

"I had a hint of it," returned Cairn sourly. "Something in the Red Sea, and his blasted crew is made up of heathen. That's enough for me."

"Well, I don't want to force you in this, understand. If you don't like to go ahead with me after this note——"

The words were like a red rag to a bull.

"Go ahead? By scrag, if he sends another man aboard me I'll turn live steam on him! I'm here to obey orders, Mr. Tredgar, and I wouldn't back out for him an' the Senussiye thrown in."

“Very well, then. As I see no reason why we should conflict with him in his laudable endeavours, we’ll pay no attention. I don’t quite like the idea of being ordered about myself. But I think this rifle business is going a bit too far, captain, and I’d suggest——”

“Ye’ll kindly keep your suggestions to yourself, sir,” snapped the captain. “I’m responsible for the safety o’ this ship, and my own ticket depends on it, so when I do a thing I’ll thank you to back me up in it.”

“Of course,” smiled Tredgar, no whit ruffled by Cairn’s truculent air; “if you like, we could lay up somewhere and change the appearance of the yacht, paint her over——”

“That’s book-talk, Mr. Tredgar. I’ve never heard o’ that being done all the years I’ve been at sea, except in books. Stow all that kind o’ thing, sir; I don’t aim to make myself a bloody pirate—nor you, either. One other thing—notice that bit of Arabic or Turkish there under Parrish’s fist? That’s some mark o’ the Senussiyeh, take my word on it!”

“Maybe.” Rising impatiently, Tredgar took the skipper’s arm and pointed him to a great P. and O. driving past, a quarter-mile away on the port bow.

“Now you notice that craft, Captain Cairn. She has electric lights, carries officials on her passenger-list and mails down below—and we’re going in her wake. Furthermore, this secret-society talk is all rot. You’re running this craft and I

won't interfere; but just remember that we aren't in the days of chain-mail and poisoned daggers, and I'm here to get some news of my brother, if possible."

For a moment Cairn looked up, Tredgar meeting the cold grey eyes steadily; then the skipper swept the note into his pocket with stiff formality.

"Very good, Mr. Tredgar. I'll not say another blasted word in future, and if we find you murdered in your bunk some fine morning I'll see to it that you're buried all shipshape, with a regular parson in command. But I'll say no more about Parrish."

For all his scoffing incredulity, however, Tredgar had an uneasy suspicion that the skipper knew what he was talking about. That it could have even the remotest connection with himself he could not see, while any relationship of the order and Parrish was absurd; granted that the Senussiyeh was a militant Moslem order, that very fact would effectually bar any American, adventurer or not, from its ranks.

Besides, Tredgar could not see just how he or Cairn were going to conflict with Parrish. The latter had tried to get hold of Cairn to command his ship, and Tredgar had himself gained the services of the skipper first. That would be no cause for the attitude taken by Parrish in the affair of the note he had sent Cairn, and the American was forced to conclude that Parrish had revealed a part of his plans and feared that Cairn would take advantage of the fact.

“Well, it’s no concern of mine,” thought Tredgar, dismissing the subject. “As long as Cairn doesn’t mix into anything on his own hook and spoil my investigations, I don’t give a darn how many enemies he has. But I sure would like to know about that Senussiyeh business; it sounds as if it might be interesting.”

For a few hours relations between owner and captain were strained; but with the next morning Cairn responded to Tredgar’s gay cheerfulness in his accustomed dry, serious fashion.

This was helped a good deal by the fact that somebody had smuggled liquor aboard at Gibraltar, and a three-cornered fight started on the foredeck, which promptly subsided under the eye and voice of Captain Cairn, whose acidlike accents seemed to have a highly sobering effect.

As this incident enabled the skipper to get rid of a good share of his mental incubus, he was quite his usual self upon arrival at Malta. Here Tredgar lost no time in seeking out the American consul, promptly questioning him about Parrish.

“My dear Mr. Tredgar, the man is a bad egg, and I’d advise you to steer clear of him. I’ve heard say that he’s a Turk, and certain it is that he’s led the Moslems from Morocco to Arabia till no one knows just where he does stand with the Porte. But he’s a bad one, according to the stories.”

“And the Senussiyeh—what can you tell me about that? Is he mixed up in it?”

“The Senussiyeh! Oh, my dear fellow—here,

have another whisky and soda ! Where on earth did you get hold of that superstition ?”

“Superstition ? Do you mean there’s nothing in it ?”

“Not a thing, I assure you. It’s merely a name, a thing of journalistic enterprise—really, I am surprised that you gave credence to such a report. It’s a wild rumour that some A.P. chap started, until every traveller goes home and writes a book about it in wild alarm—why, it’s quite a stock joke out here, I assure you.”

So Tredgar departed from the consulate, filled with whisky and soda and satisfaction, to all appearances. But his lean face, hardened and tightened by the sun and sea, concealed one very persistent thought—his friend the consul had been a trifle too sweeping in his statements.

“The son of a gun lied like a trooper,” decided Tredgar, and dropped into his launch. And he did not report the conversation to Captain Cairn—just then.

CHAPTER III

A PASSENGER COMES ABOARD

It was the first morning out of Malta, and Allan Tredgar was comfortably seated in the chart-house, engaged in more or less amiable converse with the New Zealand mate. Although Tredgar had amused himself by learning the first principles of navigation on the run down, he had refused to meddle with the mysteries of the mariner's compass; north was north and south was south, he had laughed to the skipper, and that was quite enough for him.

Therefore, he had paid no attention that morning to the chart-room compass—for it seemed that the former owner of the *Spindrift* had a fascination for compasses and had installed them everywhere from engine-room to cabins.

“Yes,” Joe Parks was reminiscing softly, glancing out of the tail of his eye at the American, “it's mortal hot down where we're bound for, Mr. Tredgar. I mind once, in a square-rigged schooner at Aden, it was so hot that it burned holes in our topsail-sheets, and we had to take a stunsail tack in the flying jib to keep it out o' the sun——”

Tredgar, who had dimly perceived something odd in the conversation of the first officer, suddenly

caught sight of the astonished face of Captain Cairn in the shadow of the awning outside.

“Extremely interesting, Mr. Parks,” broke in the skipper in his most polite tones, entering and glaring down at the unabashed mate. “And how did you repair the holes in the sheets of your square-rigged schooner, may I ask?”

The New Zealander pulled out a plug of tobacco and his knife.

“Laid ’em over the cro-jack braces, sir, an’ used a sewing-machine.”

This was too much even for Tredgar’s ignorance, and he answered Parks’s low grin with a roar of laughter, realizing suddenly that the first officer had been quietly weighing his seamanship and finding it wanting. Captain Cairn took a glance at the compass and stiffened abruptly.

“By scrag! Do I have to put a Wapping coal-heaver to watch the course when I’m below?”

At the cold menacing voice Tredgar twisted about in his chair, wondering, but Parks coolly proceeded to whittle at his plug.

“What’s this mean, ye crab-faced Melanesian? Half a point off, by scrag! Want to run us into Tripoli to mail a letter ye forgot? Speak up, man!”

“Easy, cap’n,” rejoined the mate unconcernedly, and Tredgar settled back to enjoy the fun. “Yes, half a point off will just be right, to my mind.”

“Eh? Look here, Mr. Mate, you keep a civil tongue to me or I’ll teach ye your duty, which you’ll regret.”

“Well, cap’n, I ain’t so sure about that. I learned a ripping good left hook off a Portugee on the Banks, one year, that might astonish you a bit. Handy to know, it is, in a pinch; but I’d hate to use it on a small man like yourself—a mere atom, so to speak.”

“You get out o’ that chair, Mr. Parks, and I’ll be glad to demonstrate that an atom is immortal, as Huxley said. Rouse up, ye Australian scum, so I can knock your blasted teeth out an’ learn ye who’s master here: By scrag, I’ll take my foot to you in a minute, ye swine!”

“No offence, cap’n—no offence!” Evidently perceiving that he had gone just far enough, the New Zealander screwed about in his chair and pointed with his pipe through the door to star-board.

“You won’t be needing the glass, Cap’n Cairn, nor you neither, Mr. Tredgar, though she was but a speck in the tube when I sighted her first. O’ course, sir, if ye’d pass up an open boat at sea, then I’ve no more to say.”

With this parting shot the mate took his departure forward, the skipper swinging about to scan the horizon. Tredgar, suddenly alive to the fact that there was something afoot of which he knew nothing, leaped up and joined Cairn.

Perhaps a mile away, tossing to the low seething swells whose rise half-hid her from them, lay a small boat almost awash.

With a startled exclamation, Tredgar seized a pair of glasses from the wall and brought them up;

as he drew them into focus he could make out a white figure seated in the stern behind the apparently useless engine which proclaimed the boat a launch.

“A woman, by scrag!” ejaculated the skipper. “So that’s why we’re off the course—Mr. Tredgar, I’d like to know why I wasn’t called.”

“Ask Parks, captain. I knew nothing about it. I suppose we’ll pick her up?”

For answer the skipper rushed out to the bridge and took the wheel himself. As he followed, feeling singularly useless, Tredgar saw Parks and half a dozen men standing by the davits of the launch, for while the *Spindrift* carried no steam steering-gear, she was fairly well equipped in others ways.

“I think I’ll go in the launch, captain——”

“Don’t be standing around here talking about it, then!”

Taking this for permission, the American descended and joined Parks. When they were within a few hundred yards of the small boat Tredgar saw that the woman was sitting up and waving at them, and his heart leaped. Adventure! Even as he watched, a sea broke over the half-submerged craft, the engines of the yacht fell silent, and Parks touched his arm.

“Down with you, sir! She won’t last much longer!”

It was no time for ladders and gangways, and Tredgar blistered his hands on a rope and barked his chins on the gunnel of the launch, but he got aboard happy, and thrilled with delight. Parks followed, the two men who had been lowered in the launch

already had her engine puffing, and they shot away from the wallowing yacht toward the derelict boat.

Nearing her, the wildest anticipations of the American were fulfilled. True, the crew of the helpless launch was not dying of thirst or hunger, apparently, but she was rather a girl than a woman, dressed in some filmy white stuff which the splashing seas had rendered starchless but by no means unshapely.

Quite self-possessed and calm, she seemed, though the water was swishing about her feet and the sun was torrid overhead. Tredgar noted a mass of dark-brown hair, tanned healthy face and arms, and clean-struck features that looked as if they might have been modelled on some old Creek coin.

“Venus Anadyomene!” he murmured to himself involuntarily. Parks corrected him.

“No, sir—Benussi & Co., down by the Calcara Gate—the worst damned thieves in Malta!”

The mate pointed to the swinging stern of the stricken craft, and seeing there the name of the Maltese boat concern Tredgar chuckled and said no more until the engine was thrown off and they lay alongside the other launch. The girl half-rose unsteadily, caught at Tredgar’s proffered arm, and smiled wanly.

“I—I’m thirsty,” she said, then crumpled up in a faint.

“Good enough—hand her over, sir.”

Tredgar, however, lifted the slim body and regained his seat. Parks threw a look about the

empty derelict whose engine was already dragging her down, signed to the men to start the engine, and the *Spindrift's* launch was soon heading back to the waiting yacht.

Glancing down at the pale, exquisitely modelled face nestling against his white drill jacket, Tredgar forgot to be disappointed in the matter-of-fact rescue. How had this girl come to be out here alone in an open sinking boat? There had been no storm, yet she had evidently come from Malta, and as evidently was no native of the southlands. The American gazed down in frank admiration as he held the limp form close to him and sent a commiserating glance at the water-soaked feet. A low voice broke in upon him:

“Long time plenty work, sampan coolie,
Yang-tse River way down Shanghai,
Makee love-pidgin, too muchee talkee,
Welly little ploper lady no likee my!”

Tredgar looked up, danger in his eyes, but Joe Parks was humming abstractedly and gazing toward the *Spindrift* whose gangway ladder had been put out.

The American's saving sense of humour overcame his flash of anger, and he allowed the girl to drop to the cushions beside him, still supporting her head and shoulders.

In the slow swell that was running there was no difficulty in getting aboard the yacht, and Tredgar carried the girl past an ominously silent skipper to

one of the spare cabins, where a moment later Cairn joined him.

Finding that only the girl's feet were wet, the two men removed her shoes and placed her in the bunk. The skipper was anxious to administer whisky and soda at once, but Tredgar decided that the girl was merely played out and needed sleep.

“Have the steward bring some water and a dish of rice, and leave 'em on the table, captain. Then we'll let her sleep a bit, and the bell's handy when she wakes up.”

This met with the skipper's reluctant approval, and ten minutes later the *Spindrift* was on her course for Port Said, Cairn and Tredgar ensconced in the chart-house once more. To his surprise, Tredgar found that the little captain had been greatly put out by the incident.

“Not that I'd pass up the H.B. signal from my worst enemy, Mr. Tredgar—but this taking a woman aboard is a bad business, to my mind. They always play the deuce with a man's ship. This one came from Malta, but she'll go to Port Said, by scrag!”

For once Tredgar did not smile at the earnest skipper, for the face of the rescued girl was haunting his memory. Speculating on her accident was useless, but late that afternoon the mild-mannered Cockney steward announced that “the lydy in five was hup an' stirrin'.”

Tredgar sent his compliments, with the request that she join them under the after-deck awning for tea, if convenient; whereupon the grumbling skipper

abandoned the bridge to Monty Dobbins and followed him to the point in question.

Although the steward had been instructed to supply the visitor with whatever she demanded, Tredgar was amazed when he and Cairn finally rose to receive her.

Her dress was limp, but becoming; her hair was done up in simple yet effective waves; and her sparkling eyes and entire freedom from false embarrassment proclaimed her nationality even before her outstretched hand and frank words of gratitude.

“Gentlemen, I suppose I needn’t say ‘thank you’. I’ve had a good scare, and I guess there’ll be no more adventuring for a while on my part.”

“’Nuff said,” smiled Tredgar. “Chicago or the East?”

“Chicago! How on earth did you guess it?”

The American laughed, and introduced himself and the captain who had succumbed completely to this young goddess from out the sea. She in turn gave her name as Mary Grey, and without more ado fell upon the tea-table and the sandwiches.

“Mary Grey!” said Tredgar thoughtfully. “That’s just the right name for a young lady picked off a wreck in the middle of the ocean!”

“I’m coming to that—but I had to finish this sandwich first! Now, pour me out some tea, and I’ll be quite ladylike. You see, I was hungry, real hungry, too, and it was very foolish of me to faint when you came, Mr. Tredgar.”

The very faint trace of hysteria in her manner soon vanished before the food, and when the two

men lit their cigars she leaned back and satisfied their curiosity,

Her father was a missionary, bound for Berbera in British Somaliland, and they had come on a small Greek liner from New York, intending to tranship to a German boat at Malta.

Having neglected to reserve space on the German craft, they had found her crowded; the Rev. Peter J. Grey, being in a tremendous hurry, had secured passage after a fashion and gone on, leaving his daughter in charge of the American consul to be sent forward by a later ship in the care of friends who were following.

“By scrag!” interjected Captain Cairn heatedly. “Any man who’d abandon——”

He subsided under Tredgar’s amused look, and Mary Grey’s brown eyes twinkled.

“Oh, I made dad do it, captain. He was really in a hurry to get on, you see. Well, that was three days ago. Last evening I got tired of being followed around by half a dozen young officers, so I slipped down to the harbour by myself and hired that launch—I’ve run them a good deal at home, and know all about them. It was so beautiful and calm that I wanted to run outside the harbour, which I did, and then the carbureter went dead and there wasn’t another, and I didn’t have any lights, and the wind came up——”

“And you didn’t go back,” laughed Tredgar. “Blew you away, eh? It was a foolish thing to go out there by yourself that way, Mary Grey, and I’m surprised at you.”

“Yes, sir; I’ve been a very bad girl,” came back her meek assent, with a wink at the beaming skipper. “The water splashed in and I couldn’t bail it out, so there I was, and here I am—for which I’m really grateful. Do you think you can take me back, Mr. Tredgar, or have you a wireless?”

Tredgar puffed at his cigar for a moment thoughtfully. A glance at the skipper showed him that individual making frantic efforts to catch his eye, and he looked away quickly.

To tell you the truth, he was by no means anxious to part company with this sea-foam girl in such short order; and the remembrance of his conversation with the consul at Malta decided him to give that gentleman a bit of worry. Berbera was—why, of course!

“No, Mary Grey, we’ve no wireless, and we can’t take you back, for Captain Cairn won’t have it. Hold on, skipper—don’t try to go back on your own words! Now, see here, Miss Aphrodite from the waves, can you put forth any valid reason why you should not to to Berbera in the *Spindrifft*? It’s right across from Aden, and we’d get you there before any dirty, comfortless German or East Coast boat could do it.”

Captain Cairn’s jaw dropped, but Mary Grey surveyed the smiling clean-featured American appraisingly. Certainly Allan Tredgar was good to look upon in his white drill, his sandy hair waving back from the sun-bronzed brow, and his grey-green eyes meeting hers steadily.

“I’d love to, frankly; but you see how impossible

it would be, Mr. Tredgar. I'm no sticker for appearances, but really, in this yacht full of just men——”

“My dear girl, you'd have the whole port after-cabins to yourself, and you need not see a soul on board unless you wish it. I'd like to let that consul worry until we get to Port Said, anyway. I called on him yesterday and he said nothing about your presence; besides, he lied to me in a very irritating way about something else. As for *les conveniences*, I don't think you need worry.

“From what I hear, it's an easy-going place out where we're bound for, and the fact that you were picked up at sea smooths away all difficulty. Of course, we'll leave you to your friends at Port Said, if you insist, but you'll probably have a beastly passage down the Red Sea; while we'll amble gently along, stop at one or two places to take photographs, maybe, keep our ice-box full, and eventually reach Berbera before your respected dad knows you've been lost. Come, isn't that a sensible programme for a girl with a sensible name like Mary Grey?”

She flung back her head with a ripple of merriment.

“It sounds delightful, Mr. Tredgar! So you think my name is sensible, do you? I must say that your programme seems unanswerable, but at the same time you've intimated that my presence on board isn't exactly agreeable to Captain Cairn here, and under the circumstances, I hesitate——”

Captain Cairn interrupted with an excited sputter, but Tredgar waved him down.

“I’m sorry that you take the skipper seriously, Mary Grey. He’s really a very good chap at heart, a bit of a philosopher, and his objections were made before he had seen more of you than a tangle of loose hair and white gown.”

It was now the turn of the fair guest to look embarrassed, but Tredgar went calmly on.

“Give the skipper a chance, Mary Grey! Be exactly as sensible as you look and sound, say you’ll stay aboard, and we’ll have a delightful little trip from now on.

“We’ll send back word from Port Said, and in the meantime my consular friend can worry his head off, for all I care.

“We can lay in a stock of feminine attire; I’ll see that the engineer keeps his undershirt on when he comes above-decks, and we can pick up a German fraülein or an English has-been to keep you respectable company—if you insist.”

But Mary Grey did not insist. She capitulated.

“So you called on your bally consul, eh?” remarked Captain Cairn that night, when Tredgar had explained matters fully.

“Serves you jolly well right. Now you chuck this consular business when we start investigating, and I’ll show you a trick worth two of that, sir.”

And Tredgar very meekly agreed.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST CLUE

“Mr. the Scotchman! I speak seven languages! One shilling!”

“No—sixpence! All de sights! Get 'way, you robber!”

“Me Ingleese—one shilling! Show eberyt'ing! Conversational power fine!”

“Get back, ye scum, or I'll take my foot to ye! *Rouhou!*”

The menacing eye and ungentle fist of Captain Hugh Cairn cleared away the eager guides like magic, and Allan Tredgar looked around him with a little sigh of utter satisfaction. At last—Port Said!

The yellow line of desert stretched away into the eastern sky, and the eyes of the American rested upon it longingly. So they had rested on the high statue of De Lesseps welcoming him from the break-water, upon the crowded craft in harbour—police-boats, coal-barges, liners, and one awkward thing which proclaimed itself aloud as the peculiar vehicle of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Before him lay the magic town, a wild jumble of coffee-shops, churches, fezes, shops, and tourists.

Around him passed the magic East in full review—Arabs and their women by the hundred, Syrians, Maltese, French, and all the Mediterranean races, with a scattering of English and Germans.

Tredgar was delightedly watching a team of camels wind slowly and grumblingly through the streets, when he suddenly became aware of a bowing and scraping black boy at his side, and looked down to find his boots shiny and spotless.

“Oh, give the young devil a penny and come along,” exclaimed Cairn irritably, unceremoniously booting a too eager attendant into a train of tourist-laden donkeys.

“Where to?” queried Tredgar, getting rid of his tormentor and joining the skipper. Mary Grey had been left aboard the yacht, and was to join them at noon for tiffin at the “Savoy”, after which, purchases were to be made and the consulate visited.

For answer, the skipper pulled Tredgar into the Place de Lesseps and dived aboard a tram-car that was starting off along the Rue Quai du Nord.

“Solomon’s Temple,” he snapped out, after staring a polite Frenchman into moving farther along in the car. “Old friend of mine, Mr. Tredgar. Gun-runner and all that, but the best man to go to for what we want. Blast the consuls, *I* say!”

Tredgar grunted assent. “Where’s Solomon’s Temple? What’s the joke?”

“No joke. John Solomon his name is, and if the Intelligence Department knew as much about this part o’ the world as he does, the Foreign Office’d go crazy. Temple, as Kant would say, is a mere euphemism, Mr. Tredgar—but best not talk with these dagoes around. You wait.”

Tredgar waited, gazing out as they passed the Greek and English churches and headed for the Arab quarter, the lighthouse top of the mosque rising on their right. At the Rue des Cimetières the skipper beckoned, and the two descended to the street again.

Captain Cairn led the way into a maze of Arab shops, where everything from Turkish coffee to indecent postcards was offered tourists, and finally halted before a dingy little store with unwashed windows which bore the sign “John Solomon, Ship’s Stores”, with an Arabic scrawl below.

Emitting a grunt of satisfaction, the skipper entered, and the American gazed around with no little disappointment.

Seated in the midst of coiled rope, steel cable, anchors, and mixed ships’ stores was a little plump man who wore a tarboosh jauntily cocked over one ear, and read *The Times* while he puffed at a short clay pipe.

A wisp of grey hair protruded from the edges of the tarboosh, and as the ship-chandler looked up, Tredgar noted a pair of very wide and very innocent blue eyes—the only salient feature of a featureless face.

The blue eyes narrowed slightly at sight of Cairn, but were transferred instantly to the American.

“Good morning, Mr. John Solomon,” said the skipper, with more respect in his tone than Tredgar had ever heard before. “How’s business?”

“So-so,” and Solomon laid down his paper without removing his eyes from Tredgar.

“Mr. Tredgar, Mr. John Solomon. Time for a private talk, John?”

“Glad to meet ye, sir,” and Tredgar grasped a rather puffy hand. “Always got time for me friends, cap’n. Time’s money, but a friend’s a friend, says I; and ye can always buy a clock, but ye can’t buy a ’elping ’and, I says. Ain’t that right, Mr. Tredgar? American, I take it?”

“Right you are,” smiled Tredgar. “Quite a little shop you have here!”

The wide blue eyes twinkled, and Captain Cairn grunted. Solomon turned, kicked a sleepy Arab boy into life from the shadows, and led the way through a little back door and narrow passage.

When the American entered the room behind, his opinion of John Solomon received an abrupt shock.

The room was large, but walls and floor were covered with rugs—Senna Kilims, deep Kazaks, Sumacs, and old Feraghans in a gorgeous riot of colouring.

Small smoking-tables stood about, divans lined the walls, and two immense hookas stood ready for use.

One wall held cupboard niches, Arab fashion, displaying some choice vases and tins of tobacco, while over the rugs of the others were hung trophies of valuable weapons—twelve-foot muskets, jezails, yataghans, pistols, tulwars, and daggers innumerable.

The whole formed a mass of colour and Oriental effects, deepened by a huge stained-glass window, and sharply contrasted by two electric fans in the corners.

Solomon waved his guests to a divan, clapped his hands, and an Arab boy entered. Both Cairn and Tredgar refused the proffered hooka stems, however, and Solomon's pudgy eyes twinkled as he refilled his own clay pipe from a whittled plug.

The boy brought in egg-shell cups of Turkish coffee and started the electric fans, after which the ship-chandler leaned back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Well, cap'n! Same old place, ye see. 'Ows' the world a-usin' of ye?"

"Fair, John; fair. Fine coffee ye have here, by scrag!"

"So-so, cap'n. Little present from back o' Mocha way. What'll it be this time—Martinis or Lee-Enfields? I might rake up a few pom-poms——"

"Not this cruise, John. All we want is information, if ye have it. Now, Mr. Tredgar, if ye'll

be so good as to give John the story of your brother, he might be able to tell us something or other."

Tredgar obeyed, feeling as if he was piloting uncharted waters. Since that first blatant exclamation in the outer shop he had kept strict silence, for the glamour of the place was strong upon him, and the mystery of John Solomon was far beyond his ken; but, now, as the calm blue eyes rested steadily on his own, they spoke large of hidden secrets and unwritten lore, and almost overawed him.

Yet the fat little man was ridiculous enough, with his tarboosh and clay pipe and carpet slippers set amid all this magnificence of the Orient, and Tredgar told his story with a feeling that the skipper had fallen flat for once.

Solomon was evidently master of many things, however, and when Tredgar had made an end he knocked out the clay pipe very carefully into an ash-tray of pearl-shell.

"Five years back—a mortal long time for us old men, Mr. Tredgar! But age ain't a burden if ye use it right, says I; if a man can't trust 'is mind, why, 'e 'as to trust 'is books—ain't that right? What month might that 'a' been, sir?"

"He left New York just after Christmas."

Solomon clapped his hands, and the boy entered. An order in Arabic and the Baghdad hangings fell; a moment later the boy re-entered with a small brass-bound chest in his arms, which he deposited on the divan beside Solomon, who dismissed him.

Sucking his empty pipe, the pseudo chandler drew a massive key-ring from his pocket, went over the many keys one by one, and finally applied one to the little chest.

The lid swung back and revealed neat piles of small red note-books, each with an Arabic label pasted on the cover.

“H’m! Nineteen-eight—that’d be thirteen twenty-six, Sunni—’ere we be, all right and proper. Ho, yus; I remember now—R. J. Tredgar it was.”

A little thrill ran through Tredgar, and he leaned forward eagerly. Was it possible that this queer Orientalised Cockney could have any trace of his brother?

Solomon selected a little note-book from the pile, thumbed over the pages, many of which seemed written in Arabic, and finally stopped at one which bore English at top and bottom.

After slipping rubber bands over each side of the open note-book, that none of its secrets might be accidentally revealed, he calmly passed it to Tredgar.

“Read ’er out loud, if ye please, sir. Me sight ain’t what it once was, but Lud! When ye ’ave young eyes to read for ye, says I, what price to be a using of your own, eh? Read it, Mr. Tredgar, and may it give ye no bad news, sir.”

His brown hands trembling with excitement, the

American took the book and held it to the light of the stained-glass window above his head. The writing was very small and very neat and was easily decipherable.

January 19.

Memo. Look up credentials R. J. Tredgar, U.S. Wants motor-boat and supplies. Plenty of money. Looking for El Woda'a, takes no advice. If O.K. give boat, but insure fully. Month time limit. Will leave papers, *et cetera*. Has good eyes.

Tredgar's glance flew to the bottom of the page, hoping yet dreading what he might find there, and his worst fears were confirmed.

March 3.

Boat back. R.J.T. died enteric fever. Crew (M: 27 rlj, 1 & 2) buried him. Sent papers home. Account closed. R.I.P.

Very calmly and with steady hand, the American passed back the note-book. He had no doubt now that his brother was indeed dead, but no line of his face changed.

John Solomon replaced the book, locked the little chest, filled his pipe, and leaned back among the camel-bag cushions with oracular air.

"I remember now, Mr. Tredgar. Fine man 'e was; quite like yourself, sir, if I might make so bold. Now I'll tell ye what I knows on. 'E come to me, 'e did, wanting a goodish-sized motor-boat for to take a little run with. Close-mouthed 'e was, an' I liked 'im for it. I got a fast boat an' two men——"

“What were those numbers after the word ‘crew’?” interrupted Tredgar suddenly. The blue eyes widened a trifle, and Captain Cairn moved uneasily on his cushions.

“Questions, sir? A man as asks too much gets less’n ’e asks, I says; it ain’t in ’uman nature—well, well, ye know no better, so we’ll let it pass. Them numbers, sir, referred back to the men in question; both on ’em’s dead by now, so no use looking of ’em up, I says.

“Your brother, Mr. Tredgar—a proper, upstanding man ’e was, too—’e was in good ’ands with them two men, for I saw to that. But ’e didn’t come back, an’ they says as ’ow he died o’ fever; and so they thought ’e did.”

“Ah! Then he——”

“Now, now, Mr. Tredgar! ’Ave another cup o’ that coffee, do! Ye’ll not get such a drink this side o’ Mecca again. Why, as to dying, sir, the fate o’ man is wrote big on ’is fore’ead, as the prophet says; a werry good sentiment indeed, Mr. Tredgar. Mind, I don’t say as ’ow ’e’s alive; no more do I say ’e’s dead; in fact, I don’t say nothing whatsoever, which is the secret of success, says I.”

“But this El Woda’a? Do you know what he went after, down in the Red Sea?”

“El Woda’a, sir—that’s Arabic, d’ye mind. Al Wida’a it used to be—Bab al Wida’a, the Gate o’ Farewell, in Mecca. Some says, sir, as

'ow there's a Bab el Woda'a in the Red Sea; I says nothing, for it ain't on the maps, which is werry good proof that it's there.

“I like ye, Mr. Tredgar, and I says like I says to your brother—don't go. Don't go—just like that. Mind, I knows nothing and I says nothing about it except—don't go. Lud! A lot o' good it'll do, though! But don't go, sir.”

Tredgar smiled, for he was beginning to understand this strange combination of man called John Solomon, who sat in his temple like some benevolent spider and said nothing.

“Thanks, Mr. Solomon—but I'm going. I don't know or care what Bob went after; but you've hinted that he's alive, and that's enough, and I thank you. How about you, Captain Cairn? I don't want to drag you into anything——”

“By scrag! What do you take me for, Mr. Tredgar? I don't know anything about this El Woda'a; but I've signed on for this cruise, and I'm no milk-fed baby to howl when the bloody bottle breaks. No, by scrag—and I'll thank ye not to insult me again.”

“Good! You see, Solomon, your warnings are of no avail, so we'll consider it settled. You don't know where the place is, captain? Now, I don't want to ask any more questions, but if Mr. Solomon was so disposed, I've no doubt that he'd be able to steer us on the right track.”

With which Tredgar took a cigarette from the

nearest table, lit it, and puffed reflectively at the ceiling. The fat little chandler chuckled quietly.

“ ’E’s learning, cap’n—’e’s learning, says I! With another man, sir, I’d keep me mouth shut out o’ kindness; the milk o’ ’uman kindness ain’t partial, nohow, I says, but should be spread about, like jam on thick bread, I says.

“But you’ve got a jaw, sir, and an eye like your brother’s—werry good and straight. Mind, I knows nothing and I says nothing; but if so be a man should come aboard your yacht, sir, and slip a bit o’ paper to the cap’n—why, where’s John Solomon to blame?

“But don’t go, Mr. Tredgar—just like that; don’t go. I—I—dash it, that bloody Hamish is asleep again!”

Tredgar heard nothing, but the wide blue eyes seemed to shine oddly in the soft light as Solomon swung to the floor, and he knew that the interview was over.

No more words passed. Solomon led the way to the shop, where the sleepy Arab boy was chattering with a tall, stately, turbaned Arab, and Captain Cairn merely waved a hand and gained the street.

With surprise Tredgar emerged into the brilliant sunshine and found that it was hardly noon; it seemed as if he had been in that inner room for hours and hours, and the sun was blinding after

the soft light of the stained-glass.

They walked back to the Quai Francois-Joseph, turning up a block to the "Savoy"; but neither man spoke.

Tredgar's thoughts were busy with the odd little man they had left behind and with the news of his brother. He had no doubt now that Bob was really alive.

Solomon knew more than he had said, but he had hinted enough. Whatever the mysterious El Woda'a might be, Bob was there; and as they crossed the Rue el Tegara, Captain Cairn exploded, in abrupt confirmation:

"By scrag, Mr. Tredgar, I don't see how ye did it! Ye had him talking like a—a bloody phonograph, sir! And to think he'd send us that information—oh, Lord! Ye're one too many for me, sir, for ye've made a friend o' John Solomon the first crack, and there's many a man would give his eye-teeth to do the like. We're going to win out, and I'd stake my ticket on it!"

Before Tredgar could reply he saw Joe Parks escorting Mary Grey, and all four met before the hotel. The New Zealander grinned and handed over his charge, then faded out of sight amid the throng.

"Your consulate is three blocks up the Quai, miss," stated the skipper, when they were seated at a table. "But I'd advise ye to just step around

the corner to the Eastern Telegraph and send your message to Malta from there.”

This was finally decided upon, though Tredgar determined to visit the consulate for mail and say no word of his passenger; since talking with Solomon his respect for consuls had abated considerably.

Before the magic of Mary Grey, however, the remembrance of John Solomon and his temple died away quickly enough; Tredgar was supremely happy to be sitting here with this sea-foam girl, whose rippling spirits were like strong wine to his head.

“Well,” he sighed at last, “I suppose you’d better guide Miss Grey, captain, where she can buy what she wants. You pay and I’ll refund it. I’ll run down to the consulate and meet you at the Douane in an hour.”

She smiled up at him.

“Do you know, Mr. Tredgar, you remind me of a story about a man who was always looking at the horizon? I think I’ll have to call you Mr. Horizon after this—it’s really a very nice name, don’t you think?”

“That depends,” laughed Tredgar. “But you’ll have to cut off the ‘Mr.’, Mary Grey—and if you do, I’ll tell you about the particular horizon I’m looking at on this trip.”

“That’s a bargain, Horizon!” she exclaimed, clapping her hands. “You’re witness, captain!”

“Aye,” rejoined the skipper, his grey eyes looking up queerly at Tredgar from beneath the black brows. “I’m a witness—and I’m thinking that horizons are dangerous things to monkey with,” he added, under his breath.

CHAPTER V

EAST OF SUEZ

Lake Timash had been left behind, and the last stage of Tredgar's pilgrimage was almost begun. That afternoon would come Suez—and the gulf beyond, with all the half-veiled mysteries it held for the American.

And for whom does not the Canal hold mystery? The very presence of a ship amid the sand is mysterious, for the sky-hued ditch is but a ribbon of silver strung with sparkling lakes; the boundless horizon of sand, with its strings of laden camels, its play sand-storms, its half-wild camels grazing among the tamarisk bushes on the banks, its long file of P. and O., Japan Mail, British India, Queensland, and Rotterdam Lloyd, and a hundred other steamers of a hundred other lines seemingly stranded in the wastes—what is all this but mysterious?

Directly ahead of the *Spindrifft* was a dirty tramp for the East Coast, her lascar crew interspersed with a score of dirtier pilgrims bound for Jeddah; directly behind was a North German Lloyd liner, with her band and her gay passenger-decks—and all around was sand.

Small wonder that the mystery of the land lay heavily upon Tredgar, sitting beside Cairn under the bridge awning; but mixed with the mystery was a dull disappointment.

For, though the *Spindrifft* had laid at Port Said two days, recoaling, watering, and icing, the promised messenger of John Solomon, ship-chandler, had not come aboard with the directions to El Woda'a.

"Never mind; we aren't past Suez yet," remarked Captain Cairn confidently. "John never yet broke his word, mind. Queer chap he is, Mr. Tredgar. Knows all the secrets of all the lands—even the Mohammedans trust him to the hilt.

"He has more men in his pay than the Khedive, and he's a bally sight more powerful, by scrag! No sawed-off cub of a diplomat can dictate to John Solomon. He has a finger in every pie from Jaffa to Zanzibar, and pulls out the plums, too."

"Well, we won't stop at Suez," determined Tredgar. "If nothing shows up we'll take a chance on finding the place ourselves, captain. By George, weren't those pelicans on the lakes beautiful last night, though! I suppose Miss Grey isn't up yet?"

"Naturally not," returned the skipper dryly, "after watching the searchlight half the night. Don't you fear, sir, we'll hear from John right enough."

In spite of this assurance, however, Tredgar had given up hope of further help from John Solomon. After all, he reasoned, the man had given them a clue; whatever secrets that pudgy face and those wide blue eyes might hold, they had, at least, let fall the word that his brother Bob was still alive.

Alive—and what else? What might that five years have held for the brother who had been his companion in all things until that sudden disappearance?

Already the infection of the East was in Tredgar's blood; already he pictured his brother suffering the tortures of Slatin Pasha in some Mahdi's capital, or perhaps a slave in some Abyssinian mine. As they slipped away down the silver ribbon toward Suez, he spoke enough of his thought to draw a reassuring word from Captain Cairn.

“Tut, tut! Mr. Tredgar, he may be married and settled down, for all you know. If he's been here against his will, it's something mighty unusual, take it from me who knows this country.

“Did you ever read the Koran, sir? There's a verse that ranks with anything of Schopenhaur—yes, by scrag, and nothing in Kant comes near it—‘We touched the heavens and found them filled with a mighty guard and shooting stars; whoso of us listens finds a shooting star for him on guard.’

“That's my notion of real stuff, Mr. Tredgar; blessed if I don't think old Mohammed had taken

a cruise or two in his time! You just mind them shooting stars, Mr. Tredgar; it has some bally good thought behind it.”

The American nodded, and Cairn, having delivered himself of this unusually long speech, went to blow off steam about the ears of the pilot. The slow hours slipped away, and with them slipped Tredgar's last lingering hope that Solomon would yet be heard from.

Finally, the dusty untidy trees and houses of Suez drew into sight, with the high red crags of Jebel Ataqa on the right, while beyond them the distance-greyed hills strung out seaward toward Aden and India and all the Eastern world.

It was late afternoon when the pilot, a dried-up little Frenchman, went overside. As he was descending from the bridge, Tredgar, now under the after-deck awning, saw him stop and look around; at the same instant Mary Grey came into sight.

The little pilot seemed to hesitate, then doffed his cap and stepped up to the girl; before Tredgar could leave his chair he had bowed and gone on down to his boat. The American, quick to resent any fancied insult, sprang up; but Mary Grey approached with a smile, holding a little packet in her hand, and sank into one of the Singapore chairs.

“That fellow didn't—” began Tredgar, but she stopped him with a laugh.

“Nonsense! He’s a very polite little man, Horizon! Oh—before I give you this, you’ve got to keep your promise! Remember, at the “Savoy”, you promised to tell me about your horizon? Satisfy my curiosity and I’ll carry out my errand!”

Ruffling his fingers through his hair, Tredgar smiled and pulled out his pipe. In Mary Grey’s presence no ripple of curiosity troubled his mind about the little packet in her hand, and so he told her of his quest and of the strange man in Port Said who seemed to hold so many threads of destiny in his little red note-books.

He had been placed under no secrecy, he reasoned—or he would have reasoned if he had taken time; for with Mary Grey he felt impelled to speak out all that was in him, and the secret-filled East lost its grip.

“Oh—I think it’s wonderful!” she exclaimed softly when he had done, her earnest brown eyes meeting his direct gaze. “For you to do all this, I mean—leave business and come away out here just because of a ring and a scratch! And then to think that there is really hope—why, it’s like some story out of the ‘Arabian Nights’, Horizon!”

“It’s like grim earnest to me, Mary Grey,” he chuckled, and held out his hand. “Now come across! Is that for me?”

“The pilot said so,” and she gave him the packet. It was sealed with red wax, but he stripped off the heavy outer paper and something tinkled to

the deck, while a folded paper lay in his lap. Mary Grey stooped and held up a ring of silver.

“A present—how nice of the pilot! It’s just like this little ring I got in the shop on the Rue Sultan Osman!”

She held out her hand, on which was a silver ring bearing her monogram cut in the Arabic characters—a trifle, “made while you wait” in the bazaars. That from the pilot was precisely similar, save that the characters were different; and Tredgar turned to the paper.

At this moment Captain Cairn sauntered up, and the girl turned to him with the story of the polite and generous pilot. Tredgar broke in on the tale with a startled exclamation.

“By George—look here, captain! You were right, after all!”

For the paper was a crude map—an irregular pencilled line, presumably of coast, bearing a dot at one indentation, with the words “Bab el Woda’a.” Below was the message, in the same neat writing that Tredgar had seen in the red note-book:

Cf. with chart, Ras Turfah. Note, & destroy this.

“By scrag!” breathed Captain Cairn softly. “No need to compare that with any chart, Mr. Tredgar. That’s the strip of coast inside the Twelve Apostles, across from Eritrea—so bloody

desolate that not even a Bedouin lives there, by scrag! John kept his word, eh?"

"Seems to have, right enough."

"What? Tell me about it, please! Do you mean that this Mr. Solomon you told me about sent this by the pilot?"

The skipper darted a quick glance at Tredgar, the straight black eyebrows coming down; but if there was a protest in his mind he dismissed it instantly before the American's cool look, and quietly touched a match to the scrap of paper.

"Yes, it came from John Solomon, evidently," returned Tredgar. "Look at this ring that came with the map, captain; what do you make of it? Are those my initials in Arabic?"

Cairn examined the silver trinket and shrugged his shoulders.

"The bally tongue is all Greek to me, sir. I can talk it, but not read it; but if John sent that ring, then he meant you to wear it, depend on that."

For answer Tredgar slipped the ring on his finger and relit his pipe. So the little fat "Arabian Nights" man had kept his word! He would get some news of his brother, either good or bad, at this mysterious "Gate of Farewell"—an ominous name, he reflected.

He remembered the situation on the charts, running down the coast-line in his mind's eye; Ras Turfah, the promontory near which El Woda'a was marked, lay across from the Italian colony,

and it suddenly occurred to him that they might stop there on the voyage down. But his suggestion was very promptly and decidedly negatived by the skipper.

“No, sir; before we go poking around this God-forsaken coast we’ll take Miss Grey down to Berbera. Remember that John said ‘Don’t go’; that means a lot from him. I won’t run you into any nest of filibusters, miss, depend on me for that! As it is, the glass is down to twenty-eight now, and we’re going to have a holy time of it before long, if I’m any judge.”

“What?”

The others turned, and looked about. Suez had faded in the distance behind; but not in the distance alone, for a nebulous shimmery haze seemed to have suddenly settled over sea and shore and ship together.

Seated beneath the deck-awning with Mary Grey, Tredgar realized that it must have gathered slowly, unnoticed; indeed, it would have taken more than haze to arouse him from his companionship with the sea-foam girl.

A little smile of satisfaction played about his mouth, for this promised to be the first storm of the voyage; and he had prayed for some action long ere this to test the mettle of his ship and his men, though of the latter he had little doubt. Mary Grey turned with a rippling laugh of delight, the same thought in her mind.

“A real hurricane, captain? Hurrah! We had

a smooth passage all the way over, and I've just been longing for a storm."

"Ye won't be longing much more, miss," returned the skipper grimly. "I've seen these Red Sea blows before, and sweet things they are. Thank the Lord, we'll be out o' the Gulf when she breaks!"

"Why—there's no danger, surely, captain?" exclaimed the girl quickly. "Even if it was a very bad storm, the yacht is safe enough, isn't it?"

"Aye—between sail and steam we'd be able to ride out a tornado, miss, only for the bloody islands scattered around here. Well, I'll have to be going; there's work to be done, and I'd advise ye to keep your cabin for a bit."

"Not I! Let me come up on the bridge, please! I'll sit in the chart-house and never say a word, and be a real good girl, captain."

Cairn flung up his hands and fled. Tredgar laughed.

"Come along, Mary Grey—you ought to hold a master's ticket yourself. We'll go up to the bridge, though we may have a bad time getting down if there is a storm. I must say I don't see anything very alarming about this haze myself."

It was evident that Captain Cairn did, however, for he had every man aboard on the jump, stripping awnings and lashing down deck-chairs.

Gaining the bridge, and getting out of the way of the skipper, whose language was eminently

suiting to the occasion, Tredgar placed the girl securely inside the chart-house and joined the captain. Now he observed that the haze was deepening and darkening overhead, and there was a slight rumble as of thunder along some indefinite quarter of the horizon. The skipper turned an anxious face toward him.

“I don’t like it, Mr. Tredgar—having Miss Grey up here, I mean.”

“Then send her below. She wouldn’t obey me for a minute, but you’re the captain of this craft, and, from what I’ve seen of you, must have some authority. Go to it with my blessing, cap’n!”

The skipper glared, but Tredgar only smiled back amusedly. As a new mutter of thunder sounded, the doubt in Captain Cairn’s face suddenly settled in decision, and he strode to the door of the chart-house while Tredgar listened, chuckling.

“Miss, I’ll have to ask ye to go below. This’ll be no place for a lady when the crash comes, and I’ll say quite frankly that I may have to use language off and on which won’t be exactly——”

“Never mind me, Captain Cairn. See—I’ll just lock these doors and watch what goes on, so you can swear to your heart’s content.”

“I never swear before ladies, miss,” returned the skipper stiffly, “and especially not before a missionary’s daughter. I’m not strong on religion, but I hope I have a healthy respect for the Church.”

Now, miss, with all due respect, ye'll kindly get below without any more delay."

For answer the girl smiled up at him from her chair, and, for all the blinding heat, she seemed as fresh and cool as ever, with tendrils of brown hair falling about her ears; in the momentary silence Tredgar caught the dull bellow of an unseen P. and O. siren somewhere off in the haze that now lay like dense fog on the oily sea.

"With all due respect, Captain Cairn, I'll do no such thing," came the laughing answer. "I've always wanted to see a real storm from the bridge, and now I'm here I'll stay here. If you attempt to use force against a poor, helpless woman, I'll call Mr. Parks and start a mutiny—by scrag!"

The touch of mimicry at the end was too much for Captain Hugh Cairn. His face shot purple with repressed emotion, and he turned and strode back past Tredgar, in defeat; but under his breath he was whispering sea-prayers with vicious intensity.

The chart-house doors went closed, and Tredgar saw the girl calmly hooking them shut; then the weight of the skipper's repressed anger fell on him full force.

"Mr. Tredgar, ye have no business on this bridge, and I'll thank ye to either get below or work. Ye may be the owner o' this craft, but just at present you're a bally passenger, and I'll take no more dictation this day. Jump lively now! If ye want to stay here, lend a hand at the wheel there; when this tornado breaks it'll take two men

to hold her steady, and I'll have no loafing here, by scrag!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" smiled the American, and he stepped to the wheel, catching a grin from the half-baked, sweat-dripping man at the spokes.

Parks was on the forward deck below, stowing away the awnings, and there was no sound but the dull thud of the yacht's engines and that sullen roll of thunder on the horizon.

Overhead, the sky had deepened to a purple darkness, solid as a roof of stone, while over the hidden sea played soft, lurid colourings, vastly more terrifying than the lightning which could not pierce that wall of gloom around.

Captain Cairn stood by the engine-room telegraph, one hand on the rail, a cigar gripped in his teeth.

Cra-a-a-sh—rip!

Tredgar jumped—that sudden, rending roar had not come from the heavens, but from the very bowels of the yacht herself. Parks and the men forward stood as if paralysed into statues; then a crash of escaping steam broke from the escape-pipe and drowned every other sound. The *Spin-drift* swung idly to the heaving swell.

Slowly, like some apparition come out of the oily sea, the dripping, naked, greasy torso of Durant rose into sight on the companionway. Before pulling himself up the chief engineer paused to bite a chunk from an oily plug.

“Well?” snapped Captain Cairn. Durant looked calmly about him.

“Better break out the sails, sir. Propeller-shaft’s snapped and her engines are ripped all to hell’n back.” And with that he vanished as he had come.

“*Damn!*” said the skipper softly, and Tredgar felt a thrill run through him as he realized the danger.

CHAPTER VI

H.M.S. ARETHUSA

Swiftly though the disaster had broken upon them, Captain Cairn showed his mettle instantly. The bursting of the storm was only a matter of minutes now, but his vitriolic tongue woke Parks and the men forward into life and roused all hands on deck.

The *Spindrift* had fortunately been kept in shape for just such an emergency, and the crew stood in such remarkable awe of their captain that they seemed to have far more fear of him than of the impending hurricane.

Before the escaping steam had died down to a hiss Parks had the fore-yards manned, and a shred of sail flickered out in the gloom, while aft Dobbins worked like mad, having pressed the engine-room force into service.

No breath of wind stirred the listless canvas, but the sweat was rolling from Tredgar's body in streams in the dead heat, and the heavy atmosphere carried the thunder grumble until the yacht herself seemed to vibrate with the sound.

Then, without warning, the heavens seemed to

split apart and a black wall came rushing down from the north, a white line at the foot of it.

“Hold fast!” yelled Cairn, and sprang to the rail.

The seaman beside Tredgar flung a looped rope about the American, and the two men gripped the spokes for dear life.

As the black wall swept down with a hissing roar, Tredgar felt fear for the first time in his existence; then the tornado struck them like a solid, substantial thing, and in the wild struggle to maintain his grip, Tredgar forgot his fear.

The *Spindrifft* had swung about to the heavy seas, and when the blast fell upon her she was beaten over like a toy boat in a gutter.

Only the rope saved Tredgar from going, in that first moment; as the yacht heeled farther and farther until the green seas spurted in through the lee scuppers, the driving, wind-lashed scud cut across Tredgar's body like whips trying to beat him from his hold.

Then a groan of horror broke from him. Through the scud he saw Parks and two other men, clinging to their weather bulwarks, broken from their place by a sweeping sea and swept clean over the lee rail into nothingness; as the stricken yacht slowly righted, the yell of the man beside him roused him to action, and he flung his weight to the spokes.

By a miracle, the little shred of sail forward

had lasted, and Tredgar blessed the skipper for having insisted on new canvas and rigging.

Slowly the yacht paid off before the blast, pitching in the great seas that had sprung up as by magic, and when Tredgar looked around he realized for the first time that the greater part of his own clothes had been shredded away by the wind.

Captain Cairn was in little better shape, though he still retained his cigar; but from the chart-house Tredgar caught an encouraging wave of the hand, and his anxiety became sheer enjoyment—he was fighting now for the first time, fighting the heaving decks, the tearing wind, the jumping bucking wheel which took every ounce of his shoulder strength, and he delighted in it as he had never done before.

The *Spindrift* had not come out scatheless. Her starboard life-boat hung crushed in its twisted davits, the bulwarks to which Joe Parks had trusted were smashed clean out, and the decks within Tredgar's vision were swept bare to the paint.

Here and there a few forms emerged from the sweeping flood of waters, where members of the crew clung like leeches or had lashed themselves fast; but it was hard to realize that the hard-bitten, gay-hearted New Zealander had been suddenly wrenched out of life like a reed broken in the wind.

Tredgar had little time for melancholy, however,

for Captain Cairn fought his way, inch by inch, along the rail to the helm, and when he had clawed himself into a footing he put his lips to Tredgar's ear and roared, the wind carrying the words across the wheel to the seaman.

“Give me your place! We'll have to find shelter soon, and there's a place hereabouts where I ran guns, once upon a time. Get below and tell Dobbins to get more sail on her unless he wants me down there to show him how, by scrag! Jump lively, you!”

It was sheer madness, to the American's mind, to try and descend the companionway with that howling wind trying to break a man's grip; and madder still to order men to make sail in such a storm.

He was no little relieved when the seaman took the order unto himself, handed up the jumping helm to Cairn, and battled his way to the lee steps.

It took him a good two minutes to get out of the wind, and in that time the skipper made Tredgar change places, so that he himself could gaze forward.

With the breaking of the tornado, the darkness had lightened to some extent, but now a heavy gust of rain flew down upon the yacht and hid everything; then it fled past, and Tredgar bowed his head as he fought the wheel, for it was past the power of man to gaze into that blast of wind that tore the crests from the seas and beat

them into foam until the great billows rose no more, but seemed to be lifted as foam into the air.

“Tredgar!” came the wind-shattered voice of the skipper. “Tredgar! Look off to port! D’ye know her?”

The American obeyed, shielding his face behind the form of Cairn. Amid the boiling foam he glimpsed a grey shape flitting past, as if the yacht were standing still, her black funnels spitting clouds of smoke that were torn into nothing instantly, her decks bare and deserted. As she passed, he shook his head in answer to the captain’s query.

“Parrish, man! The tramp I showed ye off Gib!”

Then Tredgar remembered, and slewed about for another look, but the grey tramp had forged ahead of them, and he dared not loosen his grip on the spokes.

Sure enough, it must have been the same boat that Captain Cairn had pointed out the morning that note had come aboard from Parrish, but there was only a passing wonder in Tredgar’s mind as he flung himself into his work again.

He was in no way concerned with Colonel Lionel Parrish, but felt wildly curious as to how Cairn was going to take the yacht into shelter, when the land could only dimly be made out through the scud.

With the first force of the tornado spent, however, the wind abated its fury, and the towering green

seas drove the yacht along like a shaving. Dobbins and his men had managed to break out a sail, which was burst from the bolt-ropes instantly; but the second held, and the *Spindrif* answered more easily to her helm.

Now it was that the little skipper showed his seamanship. Naked to the waist, save for one sleeve and part of the coat that still clung around his neck, he directed Tredgar by nods and gestures, for there was no wasting breath here.

The lean hatchet-face of the American was set in tense lines, and there was a fierce delight in his heart as he met the savage grey eyes over the spokes, for Captain Cairn was handling the yacht like the master he was.

In addition to the storm, the evening was now coming upon them fast, and when Monty Dobbins poked his head up the companion the skipper roared at him to send men to man the searchlight. For once the silent-tongued Dobbins ventured to protest.

“Nothin’ can’t stand this wind, cap’n! It’ll——”

“Go, you blasted swine!” yelled the infuriated Cairn. “If I have to take my hands off these spokes, I’ll teach you to obey orders if the bloody ship goes ashore!”

Tredgar grinned cheerfully, catching sight of Mary Grey’s face at the chart-house window as Dobbins sank out of sight. There was no fear in the girl’s eyes—only a reflection of the exultation that filled his own heart; and Tredgar was thankful

that from her position she must have missed seeing Parks and the other two men go overboard.

The night falls swiftly east of Suez, and by the time the two men got the tarpaulin off the searchlight the yacht was moving in a sea of foam-crested blackness.

A man was sent up to relieve Tredgar at the wheel, but since Captain Cairn told the mate very emphatically that he "did not propose to leave the ship to any lubber this side of a hotter place than the Red Sea," the American determined to stick with the skipper, stiff and weary as he was.

Dobbins was now first officer, and for lack of other employment Durant was made second mate for the time being—an arrangement which the engineer objected to, but without avail.

The *Spindrifft* carried her own electric plant, and this had been undamaged by the blow, so far.

The Cockney steward brought up sandwiches and coffee, which the two at the wheel gulped down as they stood, and switched on the chart-house light for Mary Grey, fetching her food and drink also.

Then the searchlight fell into action, and cut a swath of brilliancy across the darkness of sky and sea.

A good half-mile distant the finger of light pointed over foam-driven, boiling lines of breakers to a rugged coast, and at the direction of Cairn it was swept back and forth, up and down, until, at a sharp yell from the skipper, it fell to rest on a black pinnacle

of rock. Then Cairn leaned over the wheel and shouted in Tredgar's ear.

"All right—best join the lady, Mr. Tredgar; I'll have to take her in alone, now."

The American loosened his stiffened hands, both glad and sorry that the battle was done with, so far as he was concerned.

Suddenly mindful of his semi-nude condition, he gripped Dobbins, and, before the new first officer realized his intent, had stripped him of his oilskin coat and was clawing his way aft to the chart-house, wrapped in the clinging folds.

Mary Grey opened the door for him, and he staggered inside while she locked it again, and flung himself down on the locker cushions with a sigh of relief. She huddled up at the opposite end, and as he relaxed contentedly she flung him a smile.

"Are you going into a harbour, Horizon?"

Tredgar started to reply in a shout, and laughed shortly as he toned down his voice, for the comparative quiet of the chart-house was hard to accustom himself to.

"Yes, the skipper knows a place. He used to run guns there, so he's able to get in without chart or compass. I suppose—at least, he has so far. We lost Joe Parks and two men in that squall, Mary Grey."

Her face went white, and Tredgar instantly regretted the brutality of his words as the laughter fled from her sun-browned features; for a brief moment she stared at him, then turned and gazed out

on the sea with brimming eyes, until he cursed himself for a fool; yet she would have had to learn it, sooner or later.

The seething line of breakers ahead of the scudding yacht had now opened into jets of high-flung foam strung along the shore, and as the searchlight played about the rocks, Tredgar saw that there was a fairly wide opening ahead. Suddenly he heard one startled intake of breath from the girl, and the chart-house and decks were bathed in ghostly light.

Twisting about, Tredgar found to his astonishment that another searchlight was full upon them, coming from some boat to the west, toward the African coast. Captain Cairn flung one glance around, and the American could imagine the oath that he rapped out; but there was no time now to give heed to anything but that channel in the rocks ahead.

The *Spindrift* had been close-hauled to the wind, and was pitching so furiously that Dobbins had to help Cairn at the helm; but the little skipper kept her headed for the opening as straight as a die, until, finally, she seemed to shoot forward and leap at the white, fountainlike breakers.

Tredgar held his breath; but instead of the crash he half-expected, the yacht suddenly shot into calm water. Cairn put the helm hard down, and she twisted into a bay of small size that was hidden and all but landlocked by sand-blown crags.

Cairn's voice rang out loudly on the comparative

stillness; there was a splash and grind as the cable rang out, and the yacht swung to her moorings.

“By scrag, but that was a stiff bit!” exclaimed the skipper, as he stumbled into the chart-house.

His eyes falling on Mary Grey, he suddenly be-thought him of his appearance, and dodged nimbly out. “Come down to the saloon—I’ll have to speak to ye both!” floated back.

“Bless the man—he’s as modest as I am!” laughed Tredgar, jumping up. “Come along, Mary Grey, we’ll go down and have some more hot coffee where it won’t spill all over us as we drink. I’ll bet that craft who played her searchlight on us thinks that we went up on the rocks, sure!”

His gaiety was all too forced, but the girl summoned up a flickering smile and started toward the companionway. The sudden fate of Joe Parks had given her a new gravity, and now that the crisis was past and gone Tredgar felt a dull pain at his heart, for he had come to like the New Zealander as he liked few men.

The sea gives no warning in its grasping, however, and in the days that followed, the loss of those three men cut short more than one smile on Tredgar’s lips, and their memory remained long with him.

Seeking his cabin, the American washed the brine from his face and slipped into dry clothes, after which he made his way to the saloon, meeting Captain Cairn at the door.

The steward was hurriedly laying out food and coffee, and Mary Grey was waiting for them. As

usual, the skipper plunged head-first into his topic.

“Mr Tredgar, d’ye mind that searchlight that followed us? Well, unless I’m much mistaken, we’ll have company in here before another hour, and I don’t like it.”

“Company—here?” repeated Tredgar, frowning. “What do you mean?”

“What I say, sir. That craft saw our light and played her own on us; I couldn’t see what she was, but I have a feeling that she’s a blessed gunboat, and I don’t approve of searchlights being set on me in that fashion.”

“Why, we don’t have to be afraid! spoke up the girl, and Tredgar thought that the skipper looked uneasy. “If she’s a gunboat, she will give us help, won’t she?”

“I don’t want her bally help, miss. Now, Mr. Tredgar, if she does follow us in here, as she’s apt to do, you’ll kindly let me do all the talking.

“I told you before I signed articles that I couldn’t keep out of trouble; we’ve no reason to be afraid of her, miss, but we’ve no reason to want her, particularly. At least, I haven’t; you see, they haven’t forgotten Captain Hugh Cairn in these parts, though it’s some years since I was here.

“Mind, I’ve done nothing that the Board of Trade could object to, not this cruise; but these bloody gunboats have interfered too often, and I’ve come to look twice at ’em when we meet, that’s all.”

“Oh, I think you’re too worked up about it, captain,” returned Tredgar easily. “Here, put down some of those sandwiches and——”

He was interrupted by a knock, and Durant, grease and oil to the eyes, stuck his head inside the door.

“No use, sir. Can’t do a thing with them engines, not till we reach Aden. We haven’t lost the propeller and I’ve got her in where she’ll stay; but the rest of the tinware is a regular junk-heap, cap’n.”

“Then you lay for’ard, Mr. Durant, and just bear in mind that you’re second officer till those engines are in repair. You get the sails bent on and get the cable ready to slip, and when you see a craft poking her nose into this harbour you get me out on deck in short order, or I’ll show you something new about your job that you won’t like. And since you’re going to rate as second officer, get that grease wiped off; I don’t want my mate looking like a bloody oil-wiper, by scrag!”

Durant grimaced and vanished, leaving oiled finger-prints on the door behind. After grumbling over the necessity of handling the anchor by hand instead of by steam, the skipper pitched shop to the winds and devoted himself to the food before him, and by degrees Mary Grey cast off her depression.

Tredgar found from Cairn that they were in a small harbour, too small for shipping, on a deserted stretch of coast patronized only by gun-runners, and the seaman was just relating one of his own

experiences hereabouts when Durant appeared with the news that a searchlight was approaching down the passage.

Tredgar caught the arm of Mary Grey, and they gained the deck behind Captain Cairn just in time to see a small but trim craft, glittering with lights, break out her anchor a hundred yards away. For a moment a searchlight lit every cranny of the *Spindrifft*, then it was switched off.

“Ahoy, there! What ship is that?”

“*Spindrifft*, yacht, Captain Hugh Cairn, master,” returned the skipper.

“So? We’ve had our eye out for you, Captain Hugh Cairn. We’ll look you over in the morning—His Majesty’s ship *Arethusia*——”

The words were swept away by a downpour of rain, and as this would probably keep up all night, according to the skipper, Tredgar escorted Mary Grey to her cabin, and sought his own berth, too weary and spent by his work at the wheel to wonder why H.M.S. *Arethusia* was looking for Captain Hugh Cairn.

CHAPTER VII

CAPTAIN CAIRN RUNS AWAY

Tredgar awoke to find the sunlight streaming in the port-hole, bringing with it the blinding heat which had vanished momentarily upon the wings of the storm.

As he lay there, passing over in review the events of the day before, he became aware of the fact that the *Spindrift* was rising and falling, and that the cabin had a very slight list to port.

This fact conflicted strangely with his conviction that a British gunboat lay beside them in the little harbour, and he stared up in puzzled wonder at the ceiling.

No, there was no doubt that they were at sea; from somewhere above decks he could hear the hoarse voice of Durant giving an order, and the tread of naked feet on the deck.

He sat up, wondering if he were still dreaming, and found a very haggard-faced Captain Cairn nodding over a book at his side. At his motion the skipper jumped up.

“Ah, Mr. Tredgar! By scrag, I’d almost believe I’d been asleep for a minute!”

“I guess you were pretty near it,” laughed Tredgar. “What’s the book?”

“Schopenhauer. D’ye mind, sir, where he says that Dante took the materials for his hell from this world—and a very proper hell he made out of ’em? Well, I wonder if Dante ever got a peep at this ruddy ocean; it’s that hot up above that I had to ask Miss Grey to keep her cabin, or I’d have a mutiny on my hands! It ain’t in human nature to wear more than pyjamas, ye see, and I’m in no shape to pound decency into that bloody crew of mine.”

“You do look rather out of condition,” returned the American critically. “Hello! Where’d that come from?”

He was staring down over the edge of his berth at an automatic revolver that lay on the carpet. The skipper patted a bulging pocket as he made answer.

“I fetched it down for you, sir, and stopped to rest a bit in the cool. Ye see, I haven’t been off the bridge since midnight, and taken with what went before, I must say I feel a bit done up.”

Tredgar sat on the edge of his berth and looked at the other, wondering if the strain of the tornado had been too much for his captain’s brain. But although the big-jawed face was worn and drawn, and there were dark rings about the grey eyes, Captain Cairn returned the stare with interest.

“Look here, captain, I don’t quite fall for

all this. Are we at sea? Where's the gunboat, and why the automatic?"

Captain Cairn sighed wearily.

"Yes, Mr. Tredgar, we're at sea, though we may not stay there long. As to the gunboat, Mr. Dobbins is keeping an eye out for her up above. Ye see, sir, the rain came on pretty thick last night, and as I know that anchorage like a book, we slipped our cable, and two of the boats towed us out about midnight——"

"But, great Scott, man! What on earth did you do that for? We've nothing to fear from all the gunboats on the Red Sea! Anyway, we could never run away from her with our engines broken down—why, it's rank madness!"

Too weary to take offence, the skipper merely shook his head stubbornly.

"I know 'em, sir, and you don't. As to running away, if we hadn't the lady on board I'd have captured the blooming tin pot in ten minutes; but I've played hide and seek in these waters before now. No, it's not that we've anything to fear, and that's precisely what I'm afraid of; no doubt they wired down from Port Said to keep an eye on me, thinkin' I was at my old trade—they never give a man credit for honesty and reformation," he added bitterly. "I just wouldn't wait to see what they trumped up, Mr. Tredgar."

"First thing you know, you'll be running me into a mess with the authorities, captain. If you had any good reason for skipping out, I

wouldn't give a darn, but you haven't. As near as I can make out, you're just running to avoid a highly mythical danger—and sooner or later there'll be the deuce to pay.”

“Well, that's just about it, sir, all except the paying part. You trust me for that.”

Tredgar grunted, and kicked the automatic.

“Why the hardware? Going to sink the British Navy?”

“Might come in useful, that's all. I'd like to know what Parrish is up to, by scrag! I wonder—no, he'd have had no time to set the *Arethusa* on us, unless he did it from Suez or Port Said. Better keep the gun, sir.”

“Not I,” sniffed the American. “Never used one, and don't intend to. Well, what's done is done, so I guess I'll get dressed. Whew, but it's hot!”

“Then I'll be off for a bit of sleep,” rejoined the skipper stiffly, but turned at the door for a parting speech.

“With a word o' caution to Mr. Durant, sir, ye might find the after-deck would be a fair decent place for a lady. And better stow that gun——”

Tredgar irritably kicked the automatic across the floor, caught his foot and danced around, and had the satisfaction of seeing a twinkle in the grey eyes as the door slammed behind the skipper.

“Confound him!” he thought. “He's an earnest little brute, but he'd no business getting me into hot water with the British, like this. If it wasn't

for Mary Grey—no, bless her sweet face, I don't want to be rid of her, either!"

Tredgar dressed in no very pleasant frame of mind, for he saw complications ahead as a result of Cairn's action.

Bold it might be—who but a daring man would slip out under the very bows of a gunboat?—but wise it certainly was not.

He could see the skipper's point of view well enough, for all that; Cairn had been soured on the navy *en masse*, and was as suspicious of a gunboat as he had been of Krogness, that night of their first meeting.

The mere fact that the *Arethusa* was on the lookout for him was quite enough to send him off at half-cock, bristling like a Scotch terrier at sight of a rat-hole; and in spite of his anger Tredgar felt rather inclined to sympathize with the truculent little fighter.

"I'll bet he'd be a hard nut to crack as a filibuster," he thought. "He's up to every trick of the business, and if he makes a bluff he has the nerve to back it to the limit."

No doubt Cairn had guessed aright; some word of his presence had been sent on from Port Said, and very likely by Colonel Parrish—for whom Tredgar was beginning to feel a very active though impersonal dislike.

Nonetheless, the American confessed to a hearty disappointment that he had not witnessed that operation of leaving the harbour, for it must have been a neat job.

If Mary Grey had not been aboard he would have cared little enough, knowing that in the end he would have nothing to fear from the law; but as he went on deck he decided that the first duty of the *Spindrifft* would be to land the sea-foam girl at Berbera, after which they could repair at Aden, and return to find the mysterious El Woda'a. The skipper had, no doubt, made mental note of its position before he destroyed the rough map, and in any case, Tredgar remembered every line of it.

"Neat bit of work last night, Mr. Tredgar! Cap'n layin' off a spell?"

Tredgar turned to find Durant beside him. The former chief engineer was very industriously chewing tobacco, and his left cheek-bone was ornamented with a pronounced and purplish bruise. He was simply dressed in half a suit of pyjamas.

"Yes. Who gave you that gentle touch?"

Durant grinned. "The cap'n—lord, but he's got a kick in his right! We had a little argument over clearing out o' that port without the proper papers, and the little devil sure licked me to a frazzle. No monkey-work about him, believe me! I'm for him, strong."

Tredgar looked around. Some two miles to port lay the hills of the Arabian coast, while to the west no land was visible, and evidently the yacht was running down the gulf. She was rippling along at a fair rate, her hitherto unused canvas bellied out by a hot but steady wind.

“Where are we—anywhere near the Twelve Apostles? Where’s Dobbins?”

“The Twelve? No, them islands are quite a piece ahead. We’re just about opposite Cape Elba, on the ‘Gyptian side—rotten old girl for speed she is, without her engines! Monty’s up on the bridge, lookin’ for the Britisher; no watch-and-watch for us, I guess, till we know whether we shook her off or not.”

“Well, since you have the after-awning up, you clear out and keep the men away, unless they’re better dressed than you are. I’ll get Miss Grey out for a little air.”

Durant nodded, and called one or two naked and unashamed men who were listlessly rubbing up the brass-work, while Tredgar betook himself aft. In spite of the hot wind, the *Spindrif*t was like an oven; the baking heat rose in waves from her decks and metal-work, but in the stern it was at least endurable, and, meeting the steward, Tredgar sent him off for lemonade while breakfast was being made ready.

He knocked at No. 5, and Mary Grey swung open the door in response, her face lighting up in a way that rejoiced Tredgar.

“Oh, it’s you! Captain Cairn said you were sound asleep!”

“So I was—but come on out and enjoy the air, what there is of it. Jem is getting us some lemonade, after which we’ll have breakfast.”

Once settled in the deck-chairs, Tredgar discovered that she had gone on deck an hour before, only to be sent to her cabin by Captain Cairn who had followed her and explained matters, so that she was fully aware of what had transpired during the night. When she came to the skipper's warning, she laughed merrily.

"I think he's a perfect dear, Horizon! He was horribly frank in giving his reasons why I should keep my cabin, but he blushed so delightfully while he gave them! Really, I think he'd sooner have fought that gunboat than do it over again!"

"I can well imagine that," chuckled Tredgar. "I fancy the skipper isn't exactly used to lady passengers—especially of the Mary Grey type. Once he gets on his feet again after a little rest, I don't think you'll have to worry much about the attire of the men on board. He was so utterly played out——"

"Oh, don't I know! Why, the poor man nearly fell asleep when he was talking to me! But here's breakfast, Horizon, and if you're as hungry as I am we'll polish it off in short order."

The *Spindrifft* was nearly as steady under her light canvas as she was under steam, and Jem soon had the deck-table set for breakfast. He had stocked up with fresh vegetables and fruit at Port Said, and was hugely delighted at the way the two pitched into the breakfast. Finally, Tredgar leaned back with a sigh of contentment and drew out his pipe.

“Look here, sea-foam girl—Hello! Come along, Dobbins, and draw up a chair!”

The lanky New Englander was approaching. He was fully dressed, and twirled his cap between his great red hands, but not till Tredgar got him seated and smoking a cigar did he broach his errand, for he was a man of few words and as deadly serious in his way as Captain Cairn himself.

“Mr. Durant told me you were here, sir, so I’d like to have a snatch o’ talk. Haow about this here runnin’ away? It don’t seem to jibe all araound, sir.”

“You don’t like it, eh? Well, no more do I, Dobbins, but we’ll have to stand by the skipper, now.”

“Of course, of course, Mr. Tredgar. Then it’s all right, sir? I just wanted to make sure as this all-fired little cap’n of aours knew what he was abaout. Pleasant weather we’re havin’, miss!”

“Very,” responded Mary Grey gravely. “Just a trifle warm, perhaps.”

“Mebbe, miss.”

With this he fell silent, his conversational powers exhausted. Tredgar was just about to take pity on him when a hail from the bridge broke in.

“After-deck, there! Mr. Dobbins! Smudge o’ smoke on the port quarter, close in to the coast!”

“Holy smoke! I got to be goin’—excuse me, miss!” ejaculated the mate hastily, scrambling up.

Tredgar put out a detaining hand, his eyes finding a faint smudge of black far astern, then waved Dobbins on.

“Go ahead. Don’t wake the skipper till you have to, though.”

Dobbins scraped a bow to the girl and hurried off. From what Durant had said, Tredgar guessed that neither of the mates had had any sleep, but they had not been through the terrific strain endured by Captain Cairn, and were in better condition to stand further drains upon their resources. Tredgar’s thoughts flew to the smudge on the horizon, at which the girl was also gazing anxiously.

“It seems terribly foolish to run off this way,” she said slowly. “You don’t think that the captain can really be afraid of the British, do you?”

“Only on general principles,” laughed the American. “‘The wicked flee when no man pursueth,’ you know, and that’s about the case of our friend. Why they can be after us, I don’t know, but it won’t matter a bit once we get together and explain whatever mistake there is.”

A moment later they were apprised of the presence of the skipper on the bridge by a flood of crisp orders. Durant, better clothed than when Tredgar had seen him last, appeared at a run, with half a dozen half-clad men, and the yacht slowly swung about until Tredgar saw that they were heading in toward the coast.

“He’s going to run in and lie up until the *Arethusa* gets out of the way,” he explained to his companion. “You see, she won’t be able to make

us out, while we can see her smoke easily enough; there's a chance that it isn't the gunboat yonder at all, though, in which case we may soon be on our way again. I hope so, for it'll be beastly hot in there."

He pointed to a fringe of sandy islands which ran along the coast ahead, for Captain Cairn's intention was quite obvious, even to his inexperienced eye. The black smudge on the horizon had become a blur by this time, but the yacht flew across the seas like a frightened thing, and the arms of the coast opened out to receive her—long islets, low and barren, half-sand and half-rock, but not high enough to hide the yacht.

Captain Cairn, it soon appeared, was not depending on the islets alone; but when the *Spindrifft* had slipped in between the first pair she kept on, and presently cliffs closed in around her and long reaches of rock and sand stretched beyond, as her anchor plumped down and her canvas fluttered off.

"Here comes the skipper now," remarked Tregar. "Good Heavens, it's like an oven, here! For two cents I'd order the little beggar to strike out to sea——"

"Don't do that, please," came the quick command from Mary Grey. "He means all right, Horizon, and you mustn't fight."

"Who said fight?" and Cairn's eyes twinkled as he stepped up. "It's hot here, miss, and no mistake; but for our purpose this place is a little bit of all right. If a wind comes up we'll go

ashore, but I think the breeze will die away, if anything. It's too shallow to move around here, ye see, Mr. Tredgar."

"Going to keep watch on the gunboat, aren't you? You look better after an hour's sleep!"

"All o' that, sir. Yes, Mr. Durant's getting out the launch now. He'll run her out among those islands and just lie hid. The *Arethusa* would never poke her nose in here, I'll answer for that——"

"See here, captain, you and the mates need rest, pretty badly. Suppose you get some sleep, and I'll run out that launch, under your orders, of course. Just count me a member of the crew, captain—I guess I can watch for the gunboat as well as you could."

The captain was evidently impressed by the timeliness of this offer, and accepted without more ado. As Tredgar expected, Mary Grey was determined to go with him, but this both men opposed with such decision that she abandoned the project.

Ten minutes later Tredgar, armed with binoculars, took command of the three men in the launch and puffed away toward the narrow entrance to the little haven.

CHAPTER VIII

JERRY SLOOG MEETS A GROCER

Though he wore only soft shirt, trousers, and pumps, Tredgar was dripping by the time the launch left the harbour. The heat of the place was terrific, the high rocks concentrating the burning sun-rays and flinging them back and forth in torrid waves, until the four men in the launch were bathed in perspiration that rolled from every pore.

“Bli’me!” gasped the man at the engine, rubbing his face with a scrap of waste. “This ’ere place is too bloomin’ near purgatory for me, Mr. Tredgar!”

“Ho, this ain’t ’ot!” scoffed another. “Wait till ye get down Haden way, Wully! Then you’ll find what ’ot means, or Hi’m a Dutchman!”

Keeping a man in the bow to watch for sunken rocks, Tredgar ran the launch slowly out, and as he did so he marvelled at the skill of Captain Cairn, who, by his own confession, had not been here for two or three years, yet had contrived to bring the *Spindrifft* into the former haven and this one under such adverse conditions.

The passage was narrow, fringed by ragged hill-sides on either hand that rose into the sun-baked hills above, and when they had reached the entrance proper there were still the sandy islets to thread their way through. Finally, however, the launch passed all but one of these, and the sea lay open to the north.

As the engine stopped and the boat floated quietly to the swinging swells, Tredgar caught a blur of smoke near the coast to the north and raised his glasses.

The breeze, such as it was, drifted the smoke down toward him and blotted out the ship, however, and he could make out nothing.

To the west and south appeared other smudges, but even with the binoculars he could descry little, and he finally handed the glasses to one of the men disgustedly.

“Here, see what you can make of those smokes.”

After a moment the man lowered the glasses and shook his head.

“Can’t see nothin’, Mr. Tredgar. We’re too close down ’ere, mebbe. Hif we was hup on them ’ills, now, we could make hout the ’ole blarsted coastline.”

The man was right. Even with the binoculars, they were too close to the water to make out the distant ships, though the seaman ventured an opinion that the smoke to the north was drawing down on them.

Turning impatiently, Tredgar scanned the shore

inside the islands. None of these was high enough to serve the purpose of watch-tower, but through the glasses he could see that the red-brown hillside, scattered with sun-shimmering rocks, was easy of access. If he could but gain those rocks he could easily make out the ships from their height, and he determined to try it despite the heat.

“Crank her up there—half-speed.”

He spun the little wheel hard down, and the launch, rolling in the surge of swell, headed in between the islands to the sandy shore.

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir,” spoke up the man named Willy, seeing his intention, “hit’s best not to run hin too far—shallow bottom, sir. Hif Hi might make so bold, sir, Hi wouldn’t take no chances hup there; hit’s liable to ’old scorpions, an’ them blarsted Harabs might be nigh, sir. You can’t never tell ’ereabouts.”

“Oh, it’s deserted enough—never fear. See that red sandstone corner up at the top? Well, you lay out about here and watch. If I can see the gunboat headed this way, I’ll wave my handkerchief, and you skip back to Captain Cairn.

“If there’s no sign of the *Arethusa* I’ll wigwag with my arm. Take back the message to the yacht, then be ready to pick me up; I’ll cut across this hill to the harbour and meet you on the inner shore. It’s only a ten-minute walk, and I guess the sun won’t hurt me much.”

The men had been trained in too good a school to venture further protest. Fifty feet from the

shelving beach Tredgar ordered the engine off, and the launch glided in until her bow gently scraped the sand, a few yards from shore.

Taking off his pumps, the American caught up his binoculars and went over to his knees in the water.

Wading in, he incautiously stepped out on the hot sand, and splashed back with a yell, while the men behind chuckled audibly until he managed to get one pump on and hopped out. Even through the rubber soles the heat of the sands was blistering, and he regretted his decision to walk across the headland, but resolved to stick to it.

It was a stiff climb to the peak of the hill, though half-way up a hot breeze gave him some relief, and he finally gained the point selected.

Here he had a clear view of the sea, and picked up the trails of smoke to the south and west first. These proved to be liners or tramps, he was not sure which, and he turned north; as he looked the smudge along the coast cleared away momentarily and he caught a glitter of steel and brass about the rapidly approaching craft that left no doubt in his mind. She was a small cruiser or gunboat, that was certain; and without hesitation Tredgar folded up the glasses and waved his handkerchief down at the boat.

For a moment he was tempted to hold her until he returned; then, with a little laugh, whipped about on his heel and strode on over the brow of the hill. Surely there must be some shade hereabouts!

But there was none. Great masses of calcined, sun-blasted rock were strewn about the flat top of the hill, casting no shade under the vertical sun; and in five minutes the American was hidden from sea and breeze and harbour, with only the brazen sky above, while the scarred red rock about him quivered and trembled with the heat.

“Great Scott! There’s no perspiration about it—this is *sweat*, pure and simple!” he thought, rubbing his dripping sleeve across his eyes to clear them of the blur. “Well, I started across here and I’ll finish it. Let’s see—I was heading for that yellow crag over yonder, so I won’t get lost. That’s just above the harbour, too; remember seeing it as we came out.”

Somewhat cheered by the fact that there was no danger of losing his landmark amid these distorted rock-shapes that dwarfed him and crushed him with their maze and their terrific heat, he pushed forward—then paused suddenly.

From behind a split mass of yellow-red sandstone jut ahead had come the sound of voices; and the odd part of it was that they were strange voices to him and were speaking in English.

“Forget it, ye scum of hell! I won it fair with yer own dice, so shet up!”

The reply did not reach Tredgar and he stepped forward cautiously, wondering who these men could be, there on the desolate Arabian coast. Turning the corner of the distorted rock, he caught sight of two men hardly a dozen feet from him.

One was plainly an Englishman or American, despite the sunburn, the ragged turban, and the dirty *burnous*, and there was something about the set of his massive brutal jaw and the swing of the square-hewn shoulders that made Tredgar pause.

The other man was very swarthy, very moustached, and very angry, and Tredgar set him down for a half-caste Arab. The two were arguing, or rather Swarthy Face was arguing in Arabic and Square Shoulders was contemptuously listening.

Abruptly Square Shoulders turned on his heel. As he did so a cry of warning came to Tredgar's lips, for Swarthy Face's hand flamed with steel as he leaped forward.

Square Shoulders, however, had not relaxed his vigilance for an instant, and even seemed to be waiting for the leap. His great torso swung around to meet the rush, went down—and one fist came up with sledge-hammer force. The knife jerked twenty feet in air and rang against the high rock; Swarthy Face crumpled up and backward, then went down in a quivering heap. An outflung arm curled spasmodically as if the burning sand made it writhe and twist, and the figure was quiet.

Tredgar started forward, horror-struck. Square Shoulders, however, seemed not to heed him, but stared down, his face working strangely. Suddenly he went to his knees with a choking cry:

“Gawrd A’mighty, I done it again! Oh, what a dirty brute I am—jest a minute ago this man was alive an’ strong, and it’s me that killed him—me! Poor Jerry Sloog, what never hurt a fly onless he was mad—oh, Gawrd A’mighty, I can’t stand——”

“Here, buck up!” Tredgar, striding noiselessly across the sand, tugged at one huge shoulder in pity of the man. “I saw it, and if there’s any question I can——”

“Who the bloody hell are *you*?”

The upflung face of Jerry Sloog sent the American back with a leap, for the brutal ferocity of it was unmistakable. For a full minute they gazed at each other, while Tredgar’s mind worked swiftly.

Where had he heard that name before? Something connected it with Captain Cairn, but the link eluded him; then Sloog, his eyes still fixed on Tredgar, slowly rose to his feet.

There was something indescribably threatening in that low-browed face, with its small protruding eyes that glittered like the eyes of a snake; it flashed through Tredgar’s brain that the two men might have been cast ashore by the tornado, and that this man with the tremendous shoulders had been crazed by the sun.

Certainly, no sane person would deliberately kill a man with one blow of the fist, as Sloog had killed the half-caste, and then fall blubbering over the body.

“Stand back there!” exclaimed Tredgar sharply,

dropping the binoculars to the sand, as Sloog took a step forward with shoulders hunched up. "I've a yacht down in the harbour here, my friend, and if you've been cast away I'll be very glad to give you a lift out of this."

Sloog stopped. "Oh, so *you*'ve a yacht, huh?" came his deep growl, menace in the very tone of it. "Then I misdoubt that yer name is Tredgar—ain't it?"

The puzzled American nodded, holding the other with his eyes. Sloog seemed to find something mirthful in that lean hard face, for he stopped to fling back his head in a laugh, animal-like.

"Ho, ho! Lord, what a joke—what a joke! Tredgar, his name is—Gentleman Tredgar, by the Lord! Heavens, what a joke, an' he don't know it!"

Tredgar's eyes caught a glint among the rocks behind Sloog, and, though it might have been no more than the sun striking a grain of crystal or mica, it sent swift alarm through him, which the seemingly wild words of the man did not serve to alleviate.

"Look here, my man," he cried briskly, "you just quit that cackling and step along. I've no mind to stand out in this sun all day, and if you want a lift on my ship then say the word."

"What a joke!"

Sloog was still laughing as he crept forward in open attack. Swiftly realizing that the fellow must indeed be a madman and beyond all control,

Tredgar put up his hands in readiness, and the next moment the square shoulders lunged forward.

Now, although Tredgar had spoken the truth when he told Captain Cairn that he had never had a fight—barring accidents—he had quite neglected to state that he prided himself upon his skill as a boxer.

Having seen what Sloog's tremendous fists could do, he wasted no time parrying but swiftly ducked, stopped the furious rush with a crashing blow on the man's jaw, and skipped out of danger.

Sloog shook his head, then came forward again, this time with more caution; and Tredgar found that he had no mere madman to meet, but one who knew every trick of the game. For an instant the two stood face to face, and then the joyous flame of battle surged up into the American's brain, and he struck.

But he paid dear for it. With a vicious short-arm jab Sloog's fist went into his biceps and his arm dropped; he flung up his left, but too late to entirely ward off the blow, and a sweaty fist crashed into his sweaty face with a blow that shot fire into his soul, till he went reeling back, sick and faint.

Sloog followed, but that blow had brought all the American's cunning back to him, and he caught the other in a desperate clinch.

Tredgar surprised himself, for into that snarling bestial face six inches from his own leaped a gleam of alarm, and its confidence fled as Tredgar

tightened his grip, holding the great arms helpless. The dizziness passed, and with a low laugh the American broke free, sending home right and left as he did so.

“Some joke, eh, friend Sloog? Glad you like it—come again!”

“I’ll show ye, ye mangy dawg! I’ll lay ye along that—over there, by Heavens!”

Which very polite prophecy Sloog did his best to fulfil, but without any great success, for Tredgar’s footwork was a joy to behold, while his guard was all but impregnable. Twice more he clinched, and each time he put forth his strength in efforts that visibly impressed his opponent.

At the same time the American did not forget that beneath the blazing afternoon sun the conflict was sheer madness. His pith helmet had spun over the sand long since, and Sloog’s dislodged turban disclosed a shack of fiery-red hair, while the scorching heat, coupled with the exertion, was fast sapping the energies of both men.

In desperation Tredgar determined to take a chance and end the combat one way or another, for if he was dealing with a madman it was not worth while being too punctilious. He managed to get past Sloog’s guard with a vicious jab to the mouth; and as the other struck back, Tredgar ducked forward, came up almost behind Sloog, and brought down the outer edge of his opened hand at the base of the man’s skull.

It was a common enough ju-jutsu trick; but,

although the force of that one blow would have absolutely paralysed another man, Sloog merely staggered around in a blind circle, trying vainly to collect himself.

Tredgar felt no pity for the brute and was in haste; so without hesitation he put his whole weight into one blow and caught Sloog behind the ear as he swung about.

The fellow's ability to take punishment was wonderful; instead of dropping, he lurched forward and struck out wildly until Tredgar, sickened by the brutal necessity of it, drove his fist against the stubble-bearded jaw, and Jerry Sloog went down and lay quiet.

"Thank goodness!" sighed the American, stumbling over to his helmet. "By George, I'm pretty near done up! That chap must be as crazy as a loon to jump me that way—ah, now I've got you placed, Jerry Sloog!"

For that scene in the "Jolly Admiral" at Liverpool leaped back into his mind, and he recalled the words of Captain Cairn from the outer room—"you and your murderin' friend won't talk terms with me. As for you, Jerry Sloog, I think ye've met me before——"

Tredgar laughed to himself, a trace of wonder in his mirth.

"Jeremiah Sloog—what a name! I suppose if he'd knocked me out he'd be weeping over me by this time. So he was the 'murderin' friend' referred to, eh? If he was with Colonel Parrish that night, then he must have—say, Allan Tredgar,

I guess it's about time you skipped out of here. there's too much mystery about this to suit me."

He was recalled to himself by three sharp reports, and knew that his prolonged absence must have made those aboard the yacht anxious. He raised his voice in a reassuring shout that echoed up eerily among the rock masses. With a little shudder he turned to the two silent forms behind him.

The stertorous breathing of Jerry Sloog showed that he was merely knocked out, and Tredgar went to the huddled-up figure against the rock. If the man still lived, he could send up some men from the yacht, and they could bring——.

"No use, Mr. Tredgar. He's dead, and a good job Jerry made of it."

Tredgar whirled with a startled cry, and found himself looking into the ugly muzzle of a rifle in the hands of a brown man. At least, this was the thought that leaped into the American's mind, for the man with the rifle deserved the appellation.

He was apparently an Arab, light-brown of face and hands and eyes, with a brown beard that stuck out forkwise from his clean jaw; above his aquiline proud features was set a turban, dingy green beneath its coating of brown dust and sand, while his flowing *burnous* was of the sand-hued, uncoloured camel's-hair, deepened by long use to a richer brown.

"Was that you who spoke?" exclaimed the amazed Tredgar. "How'd you know my name? Who in thunder are you?"

“Oh, I’ve been watching things a bit!” and it seemed that the Arab’s eyes held no glint of humour, though his teeth flashed out as his thin lips curved back. “I am Abu Talib, the kadiri, and a hadji, as you may see by my turban. My English surprises you? Then know that I have lived in England in my time.”

“But—what the deuce are you pointing that gun at me for, Mr Hadji? Don’t you try any funny business now, or you’ll get into——”

“Oh, I forgot to mention, Mr. Tredgar, that you will consider yourself a prisoner.” With which calm statement Abu Talib raised a silver whistle and blew one shrill note.

CHAPTER IX

HADJI ABU TALIB

The astounded Tredgar stared at his captor, while there came a shuffling of sandals, and a string of men filed down from among the rocks. Most of the men had made the holy pilgrimage of the Moslem, as their green turbans indicated; some wore white *burnouses*, and one or two the haik and head-dress of Northern Africa.

These seemed to be lieutenants of Abu Talib, the American noted; also, these Arabs seemed to be lacking in the affectation for ornamented and useless weapons which generally prevails among their kindred.

Each man bore a surprisingly up-to-date rifle, and as the *burnous* of one was brushed open Tredgar caught a glimpse of cartridge-pockets sewed on the inner shirt. Abu Talib turned to the American, eyeing his clinging and torn garments.

“No use trying force, Mr. Tredgar, and as I see that you have no revolver I trust you will remain quiet. That was a very pretty fight you had with my friend Sloop, and it is very lucky for you that your humane instincts prevailed

toward the end. If he had met the fate of that traitor yonder, I would have been sorry to have had to shoot you."

Three more rifle-shots rang out from the haven beyond the rocks, and the stately Arab, who was the equal in height of the tall American, smiled scornfully and issued rapid orders in Arabic. He seemed in no haste, however, and Tredgar broke out angrily:

"I'd like to know what this means. I was assaulted by that man Sloog, and you have no right to detain me; I'm an American citizen——"

"Quietly, quietly," and the Arab's voice was very cold and menacing of a sudden. "We'll forget your citizenship, if you please, for the present. I've no doubt that you would like to return to your yacht; but you aren't going to, so take it quietly, my friend.

"I'm going to take you along with me for a little chat, and just remember that my men would be delighted to put a bullet into you if you give them the chance. We have a little journey ahead of us; but if you give me the information I want, then you'll have nothing to fear, I assure you."

"Information! You crazy idiot, I've no information to give you!"

"Shut up!" Abu Talib's voice had the bitter ring of steel, and the brown eyes took on a wicked look. "Another word out of you and I'll tie you up!"

Perforce the American fell silent after so direct

a hint, as Captain Cairn might have termed it, and resigned himself to the inevitable—having a very lively appreciation of the discomforts of being tied up.

Oddly enough, he felt little alarm over his predicament; he was still too new in the land to realize its latent possibilities, and the entire affair seemed like a grotesque joke.

If a polite stranger were to approach an ordinary citizen with the information that there was a splotch of mud on his coat-tails, the citizen would probably reach for his clothes-brush with thanks; if, however, the polite stranger were to state that the coat-tails of the citizen were a menace to civilization and the equity of nations, the citizen would be in approximately the same state of mind in which Allan Tredgar found himself that afternoon.

One or two more Arabs appeared and reported to Abu Talib in their own tongue: Tredgar guessed that the whole party had been watching the *Spindrift*, and the presence of Jerry Sloog tended to connect the affair in some way with Colonel Lionel Parrish. But how?

Was this renegade American in command of an Arab army? To Tredgar's mind that was hardly plausible. There was no war in this part of the world, and if Parrish was really employing himself in the Red Sea, it was no doubt in the capacity of a gun-runner—or he might be carrying holy but insanitary pilgrims from Jeddah, which is extremely lucrative and unlawful employment.

Hadji Abu Talib, with his two-pronged beard and cold authoritative voice, was a striking figure, dominating all things else. He heard the reports of his men, sent them off anew, watched some of the others pick up Jerry Sloog, then turned to Tredgar with lips that smiled and eyes that were hard and mirthless.

“The afternoon’s getting on, Mr. Tredgar, and we’d better do the same before your friends arrive. You’ll walk by my side, if you please, and bear in mind that an incautious movement will be apt to attract a bullet to your back.”

“Well, I’m not wise to your game,” returned Tredgar easily, as he fell into step with Abu Talib, the Arabs following. “But if you want to get anything out of me, you’ve taken the wrong way to go about it, my friend. Oh, you needn’t finger that gun—you know well enough that you aren’t going to do any shooting, and I’m not fool enough to start anything in a hurry.”

“Allah alone knoweth all things,” came the cold sententious reply. “If you are fated to die at my hand, you will die; if not, not. I hardly think you are mad enough to attempt escape; good dates are better than sour tamarinds, remember.”

They were winding among the rock masses, but Tredgar saw that his landmark of the yellow crag was falling behind and that the westering sun was on their left, by which he guessed that they were headed inland.

He felt a curious interest in this cold, dignified

Arab who spoke such excellent English; from his words it seemed that Jerry Sloog had been delegated to perform the office of executioner to the half-caste.

Tredgar had witnessed the manner of that "removal", and felt no compunction over his own brutality toward Sloog, but he was curious to find out where his fellow American came in.

"All very well," he said confidently, "but you wait till Colonel Parrish gets next to all this. Sloog is his man, and I suppose you are, too, and you'll dance to another tune when I see him."

The brown face was absolutely emotionless as it turned to him, nor was there the slightest curiosity in the cold voice, which held no trace of any accent.

"You take a good deal for granted. Parrish is indeed our Mokaddem, or governor as we would say in English; but why should he interest himself in you? Are you a friend of his?"

"No, but I am an American, as he is also; and whether all the stories about him are true or not, I'll bet a dollar he won't go back on a man of his own country and creed. By the way, where is he now? Where's that grey tramp steamer he's got?"

"You mistake, sir." Abou Talib waved a hand impatiently. "I know Parrish well, and was on the ship you speak of—we passed you in the storm, saw you were disabled, and after making our own port, the Mokaddem sent me along the coast to see if you were safe. As to his helping you, just dismiss

the thought. He is not of your faith, but is a true believer, and he has small reason to love Americans."

"So he's really a renegade—the dirty dog!" ejaculated Tredgar hotly. Before he could say more Abu Talib turned on him with a look that was positively devilish, the savage cruelty of the man apparent in every feature.

"Enough! Learn to bridle your tongue, or my men shall do it for you, fool!"

The very attitude of the man stung Tredgar to the quick and drove every thought of caution from his brain. Almost involuntarily he brought up his fist and drove it into the evil mouth, catching with his left hand at the rifle below.

The blow sent Abu Talib back a pace, his features convulsed with wild rage; but Tredgar failed to tear the rifle from his hold, and a second later the Arabs were upon them.

A dozen hands gripped Tredgar, some one flung a dirty, stifling *burnous* over his head, and with a few turns of a rope he was helpless. Then he felt himself picked up, but the frightful heat and the stifling camel's-hair garment were too much for him; he gasped, tried vainly to cry out, writhed convulsively, and, with a firm conviction that he had been strangled to death, passed into oblivion.

He awoke to find himself exceedingly uncomfortable. There was a strong, disagreeable animal odour in his nostrils; the *burnous* was still wrapped

about him, and he was tied in the general position of a sack of flour on a mule's back, except that no mule was beneath him; instead, it was some form that smelled abominably, that heaved up and down and across like a small boat in a heavy sea, and that jarred him unmercifully. No, he was not dead, by any means!

He hung as limply as possible to the jarring movement, and reached the conclusion that he was riding aboard a camel, after which he endeavoured to reconcile the statements of Abu Talib with the facts in the case.

Parrish was a renegade and powerful, and Abu Talib was on his way to meet him. If the grey tramp had run in to the coast after sighting the disabled *Spindrifft*, what port had she made? Not the mysterious El Woda'a, certainly, for they were not nearly so far south as Ras Turfah.

Parrish must have made one of those small havens not on the charts, but which Captain Cairn seemed to know so thoroughly. It could not be very far away, either, for Abu Talib must have made the trip in a few hours to the point where the *Spindrifft* ran in to hide.

"Well, we're certainly getting together with a vengeance!" thought Tredgar. "I'd like to give this chap what I gave Sloog, just by way of a lesson!"

When it seemed that the shaking and rolling jars had become all but unendurable, Tredgar suddenly heard a voice cry something, his camel lurched

forward and down with a shock that tore at the ropes binding him, and there was a stir of garments.

Then all fell silent for an instant, followed by a drooning wail that came from a dozen voices at once—the sunset prayer of Islam. Tredgar listened, caring for nothing but the blissful ease that had come with the ceasing of that horrible, sickening, swaying jar; as the voices ceased, the cold vibrant tones of Abu Talib the Kadiri continued alone.

The fanaticism of the man rang out through his prayer; but there was something more, something added to it that sent a thrill through the American, until he felt an insensate horror of this handsome Arab who had so calmly watched the execution of the half-caste and the speedy punishment of the executioner, and who had made nothing of carrying off Tredgar into the desert.

It would be long before he struck Hadji Abu Talib again, he thought; but when he did, there would be no half-way measures about it.

A stir of voices, a shuffle of sandalled feet, a rumbling mutter from the camel, and Tredgar was sharply jerked from his position to the sand. The enveloping *burnous* fell away, and with a deep breath of relief he gained his feet.

Abu Talib was standing watching him, the thin lips curved in a sardonic smile. Around, were a dozen of the Arabs, stretching a small low tent of black camel's-hair, while Jerry Sloog stood looking on. The camels were kneeling at one side, reflectively swinging their ugly heads as their jaws

ground together. Tredgar stretched himself in the crimson sunset and grinned amiably at his captor.

"I *was* pretty much of an ass to try that, wasn't I?" he remarked.

The Arab's hard eyes never flickered from his face, nor was there any answering gleam of amusement in their inscrutable depths. Tredgar fancied himself before some mechanical instrument of a higher power, some Thing unhuman, and his smile died away suddenly.

"You will be punished, never fear," replied the cold voice, emotionless as the eyes. "Why did you bring your ship into these waters? Did not Captain Cairn receive the note that the Mokaddem sent to him? Would he take no warning?"

"He obeyed my orders, Hadji. As to Parrish, I see no reason why he should order me about, or why you should, either. I wasn't interfering with him, and Cairn certainly had no intention of doing so. Why couldn't you fellows mind your own business?"

"At Port Said you visited a man named Solomon. What took place?"

"Eh? How on earth did you know——"

"Answer! Why did you go there, and what happened?"

Tredgar stared for a moment, then gave a little laugh.

"You're a whole lot interested in my private affairs, aren't you? If you want to know, I went there to get some news of my brother."

"Ah! Your brother? What of him?"

“Simply that he vanished out this way five years back, and he seems to have met with foul play.”

“Yes? And John Solomon gave you news?”

There was something tremendously compelling in the grip of those hard brown eyes; they bit into Tredgar’s as if they would bore the information out of his soul, and the American felt his will becoming like water as the voice, suddenly soft and silky, continued persuasively:

“Yes? What was it that Solomon told you? Something about El Woda’a?”

“Of course,” murmured Tredgar dully; then he realized his danger, and with a determined effort broke away from that hypnotic gaze. “You devil!” he cried hoarsely.

The other laughed with the lips only, as always, but there was a glint of admiration in the stern brown face.

“You have very good will-power, Mr. Tredgar! No matter—you’ll speak before very long. So Solomon gave you a hint? That means that I’ll have to clap irons on that little demon Cairn. He’s refused to take his warning, and now he’ll take his medicine.”

He turned and rapped out a sharp order. One of the men obediently rose, mounted a camel, ordered the reluctant grumbling beast up, and sped away. Another man brought Tredgar some dates and a flask of evil-smelling goat or camel milk, which he tasted and put away with a grimace. Slog was crouching on the sand, head in his arms.

“No show ze r-ring, m’sieu’!”

Tredgar looked up. The Arab who had fetched the dates was standing looking down at the silver ring which the American had forgotten since slipping it on his hand. Abu Talib had turned and was stretching out under the low black tent. Tredgar looked at the silver trinklet, puzzled, but the man before him repeated the whisper in evident fright.

“No show ze ring! Me come bimeby—stay 'wake!”

In blank amazement Tredgar watched the man lounge off carelessly, but he turned the inscribed seal to his palm. What did it mean? Could it be possible that Solomon had sent him some talisman to use in time of need? He remembered Cairn's remark that he had won a remarkable display of friendship from the fat little man of secrets; yet it seemed incredible that this silver ring, so like thousands sold in the bazaars, should have any ulterior meaning.

Nonetheless, it was slowly dawning upon the American that he was involved in some dark tangle of events into whose significance he could not penetrate. Everything, from the note to Cairn at Gibraltar to the sight of the grey tramp in the storm, was significant.

This Abu Talib had plainly spied upon him at Port Said, and had probably sent word to the British authorities of Captain Cairn's presence in the Red Sea—no doubt with an intimation that the skipper was making trouble for them as of aforetime.

Tredgar saw that it was time for him to step warily: if Parrish considered him an enemy, then he must begin to take the renegade American into serious consideration.

“Oh, well,” he thought resignedly, “I guess the skipper can take care of himself and Mary Grey without my help. I wonder if this hypnotist has any smoking?”

He looked toward the low tent, now all but obscured by the gathering night, and voiced the query aloud. Abu Talib rejoined with a subtle note of mockery.

“It is forbidden that followers of the Prophet should use tobacco. You being a *rafizi*, a heretic, probably did not know this, so sleep in peace!”

Tredgar did not sleep, however, but lay staring up at the stars, wondering if the Arab would keep his promise to help him. The party had not come far inland, for the sun had gone down behind the coast-hills, and Tredgar imagined that Abu Talib was heading for the haven where the grey tramp and Parrish lay.

An hour slipped away, and another, until Tredgar burrowed deeper into the warm sand, for the night was chill and his attire was scanty. The camels rumbled internally, which is a family habit, and chewed away on nothing; no guard had been placed, and the Arabs lay in a bunch a few feet away from the American, while from the black tent came the heavy regular breathing of Abu Talib.

Tredgar wearily reached the conclusion that the Arab had lost his nerve, so, scraping up the sand for a pillow, he rolled over on his side. As he did so he saw a dark form blot out the star-horizon, heard a grunt, and started wide awake. One of the camels had risen—and camels do not rise without command.

CHAPTER X

THE SEAL OF SOLOMON

The American rose to his feet silently, hardly believing that it was possible to get away unnoticed. The star-glow was unaided by a moon, but nonetheless he could make out the figures of the sleeping Arabs, and his white attire was doubtless even clearer to see.

Since the chance had to be taken, he took it, striding quickly over the sand to the dark clump of camels and the shape standing high against the stars. Yes, one of the beasts was up, and a dark figure stood at its head waiting. The man's *burnous*-hood was up, hiding his face; but at Tredgar's approach he began leading the camel away from the camp, and the prisoner knew that he was free.

The escape was almost ludicrously simple. In Tredgar's mind had been wild ideas of throttling a guard, or fighting his way through the enemy in true heroic fashion, and this tame procedure of getting up and walking away was astonishingly easy.

A hundred yards from camp the guide stopped, one hand upraised in caution, and at his muttered

word the camel knelt. Tredgar had taken for granted that the Arab was merely assisting him to get away, but as the man climbed aboard and beckoned him to follow, he obeyed with no little satisfaction that he was not to be thrown upon his own resources in the middle of the desert.

The ungainly beast swayed backward and forward until Tredgar all but went headlong from his perch; then the camel fell into his stride, which in itself was bad enough for Tredgar's sore and stiff body, and during ten minutes they sped swiftly into the night. Finally the Arab pulled up, twisted around, and spoke freely.

"Do you spik French, m'sieu'? I know not ze Englis' ver' well."

Tredgar could speak vile French, but he understood it well enough, and found that he could get along very fairly indeed with Ala'adin ibn Hassan, as the Arab's name proved to be. Ala'adin spoke fluent French and offered his services freely and without restraint.

"Tell me," asked Tredgar, "is that ring some secret society emblem? How do you know that I have any right to wear it?"

The Arab smiled. "You would not wear it long unless you had the right. It is the sign of our master and his seal, and we who serve him obey it—yes, even above the orders of the Senussi himself. There is still strength in Islam, m'sieu', and we who reverence the Padishah need no renegade dog to teach us the ways of the Prophet."

“All of which indicates that I’ve run my fool head into a hornet’s nest,” thought Tredgar; then spoke aloud:

“Do you mean that my friend Solomon and the Sultan are working against Parrish? Senussi—say, is this thing mixed up with the Senussiyeh?”

“*Mais oui!* Is it not known that the Senussi, or grand master as we would say in French, would take to himself the rights of the Padishah? Our master Suleiman is a heretical unbeliever like yourself, but he is to be trusted and holds the firman of our lord the Padishah. Now, m’sieu’, where shall we go, thou and I?”

“I guess you’re going to be a regular encyclopaedia of useful knowledge,” thought the American cheerfully, saying aloud that it would be best to return to the yacht. To his dismay, Ala’adin vetoed this promptly, stating that even if the yacht had not left the haven by this time it was being carefully watched.

There ensued a brisk conversation for twenty invaluable minutes, in the course of which Tredgar learned many things, and in fact rather disgusted Ala’adin by his surprising lack of information.

By the time the Arab learned that he wanted to reach the Red Sea as soon as possible, and obediently got the camel started to the south, Tredgar simply hung on in desperation and wondered if he were in some Arabian Nights fantasy of creeds and empires and sultans that balanced upon a sword’s-edge.

He had learned the whole story, and the mystery

was revealed; but so startling was it that he doubted both his own ears and Ala'adin's tongue.

For the Senussiyeh was a fact—Captain Cairn would have that much to exult over. By piecing together sentences here and there Tredgar found that, while the Senussi or Grand Master of the secret organization of Islam nominally paid homage to the Sultan, in reality the Padishah had lost his grip on most of Africa, and the order was reaching out into Asia.

Its vigorous strength, its restoration of Islam to the old ways and teachings, and the claims to holiness of the Grand Master himself, all tended to undermine the weak condition of things at Constantinople; and, naturally, the Sultan, as the actual if rather inefficient head of the faith, was secretly in a state of panic, while openly making much of the order.

It was a bewildering thing, this, to the American; and it was still more so to find that John Solomon, obeyed by the many who still revered the Padishah as the Commander of the Faithful, was fighting in the dark against the Senussiyeh, of which order Colonel Lionel Parrish was a Mokaddem, or prefect.

As Ala'adin grew more excited, talking back to the swaying lurching American with the utmost freedom, Tredgar rather lost the thread of events; but he gathered enough to make out that Parrish or Abu Talib, he was not sure which, had been working in Arabia for several years, and from Arabia over the Red Sea to the east coast of Africa.

He also heard—but did not accept as true—that a great stronghold was being built at the mysterious El Woda'a, from which the order would extend its control over eastern Africa until the Italians were driven from Eritrea and the British from Egypt.

Already, as he had heard before, the Italians only ruled in name, and it was the purpose of the order to drive them out entirely, to take over Mecca and the holy places of Islam, and to force the Padishah willy-nilly to make good the order's battle-cry of "Islam for the Moslem peoples!"

What was a good deal more to the point, he learned that Ala'adin was heading for a secret haven a score of miles down the coast where boats were kept, as it seemed that the harbour operations were not finished at El Woda'a.

"I guess this El Woda'a business is mostly a pipe-dream," he told himself. "These Orientals love to talk big, but just the same there may be some truth in it. Parrish has a tramp steamer, that's sure! This Ala'adin must think a lot of John Solomon's ring, because he's giving up all he knows in great shape. Won't old Cairn sit up when I hand it out to him, though!"

With the benevolent intention of repeating as much of the "pipe-dream" as possible in order to give the skipper all the thrills there were, he encouraged the talkative Arab to proceed.

Between the French and the lurching of the camel he missed a good deal, but he caught enough to make him admire Ala'adin's powers as a healthy

liar. For the Arab talked of the order, which was a brotherhood, he himself being a khou or brother; he told of the things it had accomplished in Tripoli and in the Balkan War, and in spite of his unswerving allegiance to the Padishah deplored the internecine strife which was tearing the Moslem world asunder beneath the surface.

In the end, John Solomon and the Sultan would triumph, of course—was not the Prophet with them?—but there would be many things before the end.

The renegade Parrish seemed to be the brains of the Brotherhood's extension and had absolute command of the operations; from what he could understand of the hazy explanation, Tredgar gathered that either Parrish or Abu Talib possessed magical powers, and in the belief that Ala'adin was drawing on his imagination to an unlimited extent, the American finally cut him short.

"We'd better get down to bedrock, my friend. How about this port we're heading for—will we be able to get a boat?"

"I will get one. I will leave you a mile or two up the coast, and will sail back to meet you."

"But what'll you do after we get picked up?" demanded Tredgar. "You can't show up again near Abu Talib, can you?"

"My work is ended if I help you and so serve our master. There are others to go on with the work, and I will once more become a sailor on one of our master's trading ships."

“So John Solomon has trading ships, eh?” thought Tredgar. “Also, he’s the ally of the Padishah—a ship-chandler allied with the Ottoman Empire! Wow! If I ever wake up I won’t eat any Welsh rarebit for ten years!”

Dream or no dream, he decided that the brute under him was nothing to make light of, and most certainly he enjoyed little of that wild desert ride beneath the stars. After an hour of torture they wound among hills and rock-masses, the camel perforce proceeding at a walk, and presently the sea came into sight ahead, dark and shimmering in the starlight.

Then they wound away from it again, returning after what seemed to Tredgar uncounted centuries, and with a groan of relief he slipped off as Ala’adin halted the beast. The Arab pointed to the rocky shore and handed down three or four matches, together with materials for cigarettes.

“Take these,” he said, smiling. “I do not believe in the strict doctrines of the Senussiyeh, you see. Sit down there among the rocks and smoke, effendi; but let the glow be hidden from the land and be open toward the sea, that I may know where you are.”

“So you’ll sail back and find me by the glow of a cigarette, eh?” grunted Tredgar, but accepting the tobacco with alacrity.

“Well, you’ll have some job, but I guess you you know your business, since there’s nothing to make a fire of except sand! Trot along, and my

blessing go with you, Ala'adin ibn Hassan, for this makes twice you've saved my life to-night."

Having made sure that he understood the instructions, the Arab lost no time, but turned the grumbling camel and was gone like a shadow. Still unable to quite persuade himself of the reality of it all, Tredgar rolled a cigarette, lit it, and with contentment in his soul scooped out a hollow in the warm sand and sat down to think it over.

Either he had found a lunatic asylum let loose, or he had stumbled upon a pretty big thing—and the more he thought about it the more he inclined toward the latter supposition.

Parrish had tried to get hold of Cairn in Liverpool, and the captain would have been an ideal aid, provided that the renegade was doing as Ala'adin declared. But what stuck in Tredgar's crop was the idea of the Padishah of the Ottoman Empire, the supreme head of the orthodox Moslem religion, allying himself with pudgy John Solomon the ship-chandler and filibuster—the latter not even so much as a renegade.

"If this weird yarn is true," he reflected, "then John Solomon must be even a bigger man than Cairn said. By George, this seal of his certainly did the business to-night! I feel sorry for my Arabian friend, if Abu Talib ever gets his fingers on him."

It was well for Allan Tredgar that he could not see across the future in that hour.

Sitting there among the rocks, with the rippling swish and fall of the waves to right and left, and the empty desert behind, it was gradually impressed on the American that the hand of chance had thrust him into a rather precarious position.

He had made a friend of Solomon, unaccountably, and an enemy of Parrish; Jerry Sloog, the murderer, was now his bitter foe, as was Abu Talib, and all this within the space of a few hours.

It had begun, he thought with some disgust, by the skipper's playing tricks on the *Arethusa*; but the strange part of it was that Tredgar felt he was really enjoying himself.

"If it wasn't for Mary Grey I'd feel like pitching into this game myself," he muttered. "It—why, it makes a chap feel as if he were alive. Yes, sir, just as soon as I can pick up the *Spindrifft* and turn Mary Grey over to her folks, I've a notion to look up Solomon and start something. If this is real stuff, it's the chance of a lifetime to sit into a big game, and I'll be darned if I'll pass it up!"

Which conclusion would have been all very well in the end, but that the hand of chance still had a finger in the pie of destiny. As Tredgar gazed out over the darkling waters, watching for some sign of the coming Ala'adin, it occurred to him that he did not have to look up John Solomon in order to "start something"; things seemed to have started automatically, and he was just at present in a rather tight place.

“If anything happens to Ala’adin, I’m left sitting between the devil and the deep Red Sea, with a vengeance! I’d like to meet that fellow Parrish; he must be a fine sort of a chap in his way—though I can’t say that I particularly admire his way.

“I wonder if Bob came out here to look up this Senussiyeh business? That doesn’t stand to reason, though; he’d never have butted into this affair—but why did Solomon hint about El Woda’a, the way he did? I’m beginning to see light, but I’ll have to get another lantern before the road shows clear. By George, I forgot to ask Ala’adin anything about Bob!”

So he sat and mused and shivered, for the desert is cold when the sun has gone. Once, from somewhere below the sea-horizon, a pencil of light flashed up and across the sky, and vanished—the searchlight from some liner that kept well away from the treacherous Arabian coast.

Tredgar was sleepy and weary, but the tang of Ala’adin’s villainous tobacco served to drive off slumber, and he kept a keen lookout for some sign from the sea.

When it came, however, it was not from the sea, but from the coast to the south—a single distant shot, followed by an irregular scattering fusillade.

It brought Tredgar to his feet instantly, but no further sound came to him; he was alone with the waves and the sand and the stars, and now for the

first time he felt a sense of desolateness that amounted almost to depression.

The stars were very far away, and he was a stranger in a hostile land: there was a twang of enmity in those far rifle-shots, that laid hold on him suddenly and completely.

“Here, old sport, you’ve got to buck up,” and he roused himself to roll another cigarette. “Probably those shots mean that Ala’adin ran into trouble—or Abu Talib maybe on the trail. If I’m here when the sun comes up, I’ll have to figure on swimming across to Egypt—and I’m not Moses enough for that, by a long shot!”

He struck his last match and puffed in silence. Hardly was the cigarette half-gone, when he became aware of a dark object on the sea, and dimly made out the form of a small boat under a very brown and ancient sail. Then a soft hail came to him.

“M’sieu’ effendi!”

“All right, old man. Head for me and you’ll miss the rocks.”

Tredgar had already figured out the best landing-place, and now walked down to it, his glowing cigarette a guide to the boatman. The sail flapped wildly, then the dim shape resolved itself into a long, double-ended fishing-boat, whose occupation was denoted by its odour long before it came ashore.

The American jumped in and shoved her out with the motion, a word from Ala’adin directing

him to take the rudder-oar in the stern. They pulled away from the land, slowly but surely, and Tredgar snapped the butt of his cigarette over into the waves as he settled back comfortably.

Ala'adin threw him a *burnous*, then came aft and took the helm himself. Tredgar found that there was water forward in the bow, together with dates, and not until he had, to some extent, satisfied his hunger and thirst did he demand to know what had happened.

The offshore wind was not strong enough to heel over the lateen-sailed craft, and the Arab kept her headed directly seaward.

His story was very simple and very alarming. Abu Talib and his men had not only discovered the escape, but had struck directly for the port, no doubt guessing what Ala'adin would do. The latter had reached the place a scant half-hour ahead of them, had found the grey tramp gone, and nothing in the harbour but a large dhow and a few small fishing-boats. Into one of these he had put dates and water, and started out with her; before he had reached the sea—for the haven seemed to be an extremely secret but fairly large one—Abu Talib had come up, the men in the encampment were aroused, and Ala'adin had fled with several dozen ineffective bullets after him.

“Well done, Ala'adin ibn Hassan! Got off scot-free, eh? Now for a clear run across to the nearest civilization!”

“But, effendi! We will be pursued by the dhow, of a certainty! *Oui*, and our only chance is to reach the track of steamers before sunrise—may Allah grant it!”

CHAPTER XI

COLONEL PARRISH APPEARS

Tredgar flung off his *burnous* and rose. Ala'-adin sat immobile but watchful in the stern, the breeze was freshening, and the swift eastern dawn was streaking into the sky. Behind them the Arabian shore lay as a blue line on the horizon, and the little boat slipped lightly over the slow heaving surges of the ground swell toward the southwest.

"Here, my friend," exclaimed Tredgar, "you get some sleep and give me that oar. I'm not much of a sailor, but I guess I can keep this craft before the wind. Hello, say, you're on the job right enough!"

His eye had fallen on a rifle which lay close to the Arab's hand, but the latter merely rose in silence, handed over the steering-oar, and stretched himself out forward. Tredgar demanded tobacco, and got it, after which he settled down to keep watch for a ship, though at present the horizon was bare enough.

The events of the last two days had worked an indefinable change in the face of the American.

The lean, almost raw-boned features given him by Nature and heredity had been worked over by Nature on the voyage down, and by environment since leaving Port Said, the result being that they now possessed a new appearance of resolution and self-reliance, hard to define and yet there.

Two days can effect a good deal, and Tredgar, suddenly plunged from a sedentary existence into hardship and activity, was beginning to show the stuff of which he was made. Formerly, he had asked for what he wanted in a good-humoured, easy-going fashion; now he had come to demand, or to take without asking, with the hidden strength and authority of him brought full out to the surface.

That fight with Jerry Sloog had awakened the consciousness of mastery within him, and this world's goods are his who takes them in the calm assumption of ownership.

Slowly the fishing boat drove toward Africa, requiring almost no effort at the steering oar. Tredgar wondered what had become of the *Spindrift* during the night; she could not be so very far away, and if the *Arethusa* was still searching for her, she, too, must be somewhere just below the horizon.

In the cold light of day, speaking very figuratively, Tredgar began to lose faith in the Arab's story; it was hard to believe that any such thing as the Senussiyeh could exist, or that Colonel Lionel Parrish could entertain any wild dream of empire building in this dreary sun-baked land.

Almost upon the thought, he turned, and fear leaped unto his mind. Perhaps two miles behind, was a sail, a brown patch against the sky! And there in the north, up along the coastline's dim purple, was a speck of black that grew and grew and puffed seaward and was gone.

But it brought a desperate hope to the American, for he knew that it was from the steamer, possibly the gunboat herself.

Instantly he brought the oar over and the boat swung about. Tredgar's only hope was to get within sight of that steamer before the dhow caught him up; that the latter had sighted the boat by this time there was small doubt, but the speck of smoke now became a slight smudge against the purple, and the chance must be taken.

Tredgar regretted that he had not headed across the wind before, since it was evident that his craft made better time when tacking than she did before the wind. She heeled over, Tredgar joyously perched himself on the weather gunnel, and Ala'adin, rolled about with the sack of dates and the water-skin, jumped up, wide awake.

A single exclamation broke from him as his eyes fell on the brown sail behind, but when Tredgar pointed off the starboard bow to the smoke, the man shook his head.

"*Allahu ill' allah!* Effendi, our fate is written on our foreheads, and we are in the power of the All Merciful. We are lost."

Tredgar grinned at Ala'adin cheerfully, for the man was suddenly utterly disheartened.

“We are not, Mr. Ala’adin! How large is the mast of that dhow?”

“How large, m’sieu’ effendi? *Je ne sais pas!*”

“Well, you forget that Jenny says pass, and get ready to use this rifle, savvy? When she gets a little nearer you might be able to cut away something with a lucky bullet, and every little bit is going to help.”

Ala’adin nodded and took the weapon, his spirits somewhat revived. Tredgar’s confidence was fictitious, however, for he knew that the rifle could effect little, and they were in desperate case. He dared not tack out and back, but hauled the boat closer to the wind and headed directly for the smoke-smudge.

Slowly the dhow gained on them, until finally Tredgar had to acknowledge that the effort was hopeless. The smoke had increased somewhat in size, but after half an hour the dhow was in full sight behind them as they rose to the crests. Then it was that Ala’adin settled himself against the mast forward, filled the magazine of his rifle and began firing, his brown face set in desperate resolve. Tredgar expected to receive a volley in return, but to his surprise no answer was made, and if Ala’adin effected anything, it could not be detected.

White and brown figures could be made out on the deck of the dhow, nor did they vanish for all of the Arab’s fusillade. The American remembered

that Abu Talib expected to extract some hypothetical information from him, and concluded that the men on the dhow would take them alive, if possible.

Ala'adin had no such hopes, however. After emptying his magazine and staring wildly at the craft behind, he fished beneath his *burnous* for another reload. Tredgar had taken it for granted from the man's reckless firing that he had ammunition in plenty, and glanced about in dismay as Ala'adin emitted a curse and flung the empty rifle down.

"*Kismet*—it is written! Effendi, when we are taken you must say nothing of our master. As yet the Mokaddem knows nothing, but he suspects much."

"Very well, old man," returned Tredgar quietly. "I'll say that I bribed you to help me get away. How's that?"

The other nodded and huddled up in the bow, turning his back on the dhow and silently gazing at that faint blur of smoke ahead which seemed to so persistently keep its distance.

There was something indescribably terrible in his attitude of waiting, as if he already knew his doom and accepted it with the fatalism of his creed. Tredgar felt helpless pity for the man, who had done his best, failed utterly, and now was ready for the penalty; and he resolved that he would not stand by and watch Jerry Sloop perform his work, though he knew well that he could not save Ala'adin.

A glance showed him that the dhow was close upon them now and coming up fast, while the smudge of smoke, hanging low on the water, offered little hope.

The race was lost, and, recognizing the fact, Tredgar left the oar, went forward, and loosened the sail, leaving it to flap in the wind. Then he crouched down beside the Arab as they swung about in the surge and put out a hand.

“I’m sorry, Ala’adin. If I can do anything for you, I will; but—well, I guess we’re both up against it pretty hard. I’m sorrier for your sake than I am for my own, just the same.”

The Arab gravely took the proffered hand, looked down at it, then suddenly brought up the seal of Solomon against his brow.

“M’sieu’ effendi, you are an unbeliever; but may God lighten the fires of hell for you! What is written is written, and the decrees of God are immutable. The Senussiyeh spares none, effendi; yet if either of us should escape, let him bear word to our master Suleiman that the other died like a man.”

“It’s a bargain!” exclaimed Tredgar, admiring the man, and ever after that the two spoke no more together.

There was nothing startling, nothing dramatic, in the way they came aboard the dhow. Little more than an hour had elapsed since sunrise, and yet the day was scorching hot, even the breeze seeming to have drunken in the sun’s heat.

A few strokes of the steering-oar kept the boat from broaching to, and as the big brown sail came off the dhow and she forged slowly alongside them, Tredgar saw the stately figure of Abu Talib the Kadiri, standing like some remorseless impersonation of Nemesis, in the prow.

The craft was of the common type of Arab dhow, essentially the same river-boat as was used by the Pharaohs thousands of years ago—long and low with a single mast and a deck-house and cabin amidships.

As the counter of the dhow surged up, one of the men flung down a rope, and a moment after the boat was dragging under the quarter of the larger vessel. The dhow was unladen, apparently, but stood so low in the water that those on her deck could reach down and catch the hands of the two fugitives.

As they clambered up, the rope was torn away, and the boat left to her fate; a hoarse shout, the creaking of ropes, and the big brown sail went up and bellied out once more.

Tredgar and Ala'adin stood side by side against the bulwark, but the eyes of the Arabs crowding around were fastened on Abu Talib, who slowly strode aft from the bow, his cruel, ascetic, handsome face gleaming beneath the hood of his brown *burnous*, which almost gave him the appearance of a monk. He stopped opposite Ala'adin, speaking in French.

“Ala'adin ibn Hassan, why did you betray your oaths to the brotherhood?”

“This *kafir* promised me much gold,” returned the man stolidly, his eyes fixed on the horizon.

“You lie! Tell the truth on the Koran!”

A quiver passed through the Arab, but his eyes did not waver.

“It is truth. He promised me gold.”

For an instant the brown eyes turned to Tredgar, then flickered away.

“Let Allah judge the liar!” he declared solemnly. “Away from him, brethren, that the punishment of Heaven may come on him through our father, Senussi Ahmed el Sherif!”

The men moved back hastily enough. Tredgar looked about for Jerry Sloog, but saw nothing of the man, and wondered how the promised judgement would fall.

He drew himself up and met the hard inhuman eyes of Abu Talib steadily, saw that smile steal over the thin lips, and the hands of the Kadiri rose as if in appeal to the heavens.

“*Pung-g-g!*”

A slight, almost inaudible sound came from somewhere about the ship. Ala'adin still stared out at the horizon, but suddenly a little trickle of red leaped out on his forehead, a look of surprise swept to his face, he clutched spasmodically at Tredgar, and a roll of the dhow sent him to the deck, where he lay motionless.

Horror-struck, Tredgar collected himself to meet the same fate, for well enough he had recognized the sound of a maxim silencer, and guessed

that Jerry Sloog was behind it. Abu Talib, however, confronted him, speaking now in English:

“Mr. Tredgar, I would be glad to accept your parole, but I think it is safer to iron you—since we are going in search of your yacht. I would like to spare your life for the present, for reasons of my own; but if you resist—well, you have seen.”

“I shall not resist,” returned the American, his voice as cold and steel-like as the other’s. “But you shall pay for this man’s life some day, you dirty nigger!”

Strangely, the taunt did not seem to sting Abu Talib, who merely beckoned two of his men forward, while others flung the body of Ala’adin over the side; these fastened light but strong handcuffs about Tredgar’s wrists. He was then led to the cabin, preceded by Abu Talib, passed through a simply furnished “stateroom”, and was roughly pushed into a narrow passage-way. Here, instead of going farther, his shackles were chained to a pin in the wooden bulkhead, and he was left alone.

Blank dismay settled on Tredgar when he realized that his prison must be some secret hiding-place built in the side of the dhow, and from the smell he made a guess that Abu Talib ran slaves on occasion, while the heat was terrific.

His only alleviation was that light entered from an aperture like a porthole, and by standing on his toes he found that he could get sight of the sea for a small extent of space.

Yet he was not cut off so entirely from the outside world, for he could distinctly hear everything that passed above-decks, even to the talk of the Arabs. He had seen, as he was taken down, that he was on the starboard side of the dhow, and this was confirmed by sight of the purple coastline of Arabia; as the sun glared directly into his porthole, he figured out that they were heading northeast, although such a course would be directly toward that smoke on the horizon.

“Looks mighty bad,” thought Tredgar, slumping down from his observation point. “That devil said something about being on the way to find the yacht, too.”

From what he had taken in while above, he guessed that Abu Talib had some thirty men on board, all armed, and if they found the *Spindrift*——

“God!” cried the American hoarsely, vainly tugging at his irons. “Mary Grey’s aboard her!”

How long he lay bitterly thinking over this fact he never knew. It had not occurred to him that the yacht and the sea-foam girl could be in any danger, and the very idea was all but paralysing.

Suddenly, he heard a great shouting and trampling of feet above, canvas flapped, and the rays of sun through the port above him showed that the dhow had swung about.

Before he could get up, two men appeared behind him, and in a jiffy he found himself very thoroughly gagged by a strip of cloth wound around and

around his mouth and head. Then he was once more alone, and more helpless than ever.

The thin chains fastening his irons to the bulkhead allowed him to strain up against the opposite wall of the narrow passage, and when he reached the porthole he almost fell back in amazement. For there, a hundred feet away, and so close that he could read the name on her counter, was the *Arethusa*, while a launch was puffing toward the dhow!

Tredgar stared, almost disbelieving his senses until he realized that the gunboat had made the smoke toward which he and Ala'adin had steered, and that Abu Talib had deliberately sailed in to meet her.

He tried in vain to shout, as the launch swept in only a few yards away, commanded by a boyish lieutenant, while the rail of the *Arethusa* was crowded with curious jackies. Then the launch passed out of his vision, but he heard distinctly the conversation that followed her reception by Abu Talib.

“Who's the master of this craft?” came the officer's crisp voice.

“I am her owner and commander, lieutenant, and she is my private yacht, so to speak. I trust you observed our signal?”

Tredgar could picture to himself the amazement of the officer at the Arab's fluent English. He already knew, through Cairn, that all coasting

vessels and dhows had to carry signals and had to be licensed to fly the flag of Italy, France, or England, as precaution against gun-runners both to Arabia and to the African coasts.

“By Jove! I say, you know—who *are* you, anyway? I’ll have to look you over, you know, and I must say your bally crew is armed to the teeth!”

“My papers, sir. I am the Hadji Abu Talib—I fancy your commander will know the name, as I have met most of the officers on the station.”

“Yes, the papers are right enough,” somewhat ruefully. “I’ll just take a look-in at the hold. My commander would hardly know you. I’m fairly new out here myself, but Lieutenant Krogness has only just arrived on the station.”

Tredgar fell back against the wall. Krogness—here!

“Well, I imagine all’s right, Hadji. By the way, have you seen anything of a grey yacht, about nine hundred tons, under canvas or steam—”

“If you mean the *Spindrift*, sir, we passed her early this morning, headed south.”

“By Jove—really? That’ll be great news for the commander, Hadji; thanks awfully! We’ve been hunting high and low for her. All right, men; fend off there, bow!”

Once more the tender swept past, while Tredgar strained at his gag in vain, tried to loosen it with his bound hands, tried to beat his irons against

the ship's side. But he was helpless, and when he finally looked once more, the launch had reached the gunboat and thick smoke was pouring from her funnels. Abu Talib had got rid of her.

The American saw the whole plan in a flash. Abu Talib knew or guessed that Captain Cairn had heard of El Woda'a, from Solomon, and had determined to silence him, as well as Tredgar.

No doubt the yacht still lay in the haven where Tredgar had left her, for the *Arethusa* had probably been steaming up and down the coast in search of her.

Now Tredgar all but gave up as he realized that this man Abu Talib, of the Kadiri tribe, was a person to be reckoned with to the uttermost; he had nothing to fear from any cruiser of the powers; he seemed to have a definite connection with Parrish, and plenty of men.

At this, Tredgar cursed the cautious fears of his skipper in right good earnest. If Cairn had not slipped away from the gunboat in that mad fashion everything would have gone well.

Krogness, instead of being on the track of Cairn, was looking up his friend; he must have come straight from England to Malta, then have gone on to Aden to take command of the *Arethusa*, for Tredgar had heard no word from him.

He lay there for an hour in the stifling heat, cursing the fate that had sent him such a skipper and had broken his engines and flung him into the

hands of the Senussiyeh. He was putting full faith in Ala'adin's story by this time; the man's death, the way in which Abu Talib had talked to the young junior lieutenant, the very fact that the Hadji seemed well known on the station—all pointed to a strong organization that could enforce its laws and, at the same time, throw dust in British eyes.

After a time the door behind him opened; two men appeared, who removed his gag and set down food and water, and Abu Talib entered.

“Well, Mr. Tredgar, I suppose you overheard the conversation?”

“Yes. You're clever in your way, I'll admit. But you'll find Captain Cairn a tough customer, if you're really going to tackle him.”

“I am, and before very long, I imagine. I'll be very sorry to scuttle that yacht you chartered; but as none of you will ever get back——”

“You fiend! There's a girl on her. Why, damn you——” Tredgar broke out furiously, but at sight of the cold, hard, brown eyes he ceased abruptly, conscious of the futility of words against this man of stone.

“A girl—so? That is too bad—for her. I'm afraid I can't let a girl stand in my way, Mr. Tredgar!”

“You wait, you blasted nigger! Wait till Colonel Parrish hears about this! I guess he'll have a word to say about your attacking Americans!

And if you dare touch that girl, I'll tear the dirty soul out of you—unless Parrish does it first!”

“You poor fool!” The other looked down at him, scorn on the cruel lips. “You poor fool! I am Lionel Parrish!”

And turning, he left Tredgar alone.

CHAPTER XII

CAPTAIN CAIRN LOSES HIS SHIP

Captain Hugh Cairn was a man proud above the ordinary of his authority and his seamanship, with all the word comprises, and very rightly so, too. Now, for a man with a master's ticket to lose his ship is a bad thing enough; but when that ship is literally taken away from him it is little short of a catastrophe.

Accordingly, Captain Cairn can hardly be blamed not only for refusing to say a word on the subject subsequently, but for making it an actual line of demarcation between friends and enemies.

For instance, when one of his oldest cronies once dared bluntly to put the question to him as to how the *Spindrif* was lost, the skipper not only severed the friendship of years, but did it at one blow, quite literally.

Thus one source of information was lost; and as the only other one lay in the journals of Allan Tredgar, those journals must be blamed for any lack of clarity in the account of the matter.

It has never been satisfactorily explained, for example, just why the dhow should have been allowed to enter the little harbour at all, or why

the captain was not more completely on guard, especially after the loss of his owner: although there are whispers to the effect that the skipper was too much absorbed in the charms of his passenger at the time. That might have something to do with his reticence on the subject, if true.

It was late afternoon when Tredgar woke up. After the astounding and unexpected revelation of Abu Talib, or Parrish, the American had remained watching at his porthole for hours, waiting with the dread horror of suspense heavy upon him.

Sleeplessness, weariness, and anxiety had finally worked their will, however, aided by the terrible baking heat of his narrow prison, and he had dropped to the floor with anguish tearing at his soul. The discovery of the identity of Abu Talib the Kadiri and Colonel Lionel Parrish had destroyed his hope in everything—save himself.

He was roused to consciousness by a familiar voice penetrating his prison, and stumbled to the porthole in a mingling of hope and fear. Then he uttered a groan of dismay. The dhow had not only entered the little haven, but actually was lying across the stern of the *Spindrift*, the two vessels touching bulwarks, while from his post Tredgar had a view of the full sweep of the yacht's port side forward. Mary Grey was not visible but Captain Cairn stood on the bridge, while Dobbins and Durant were putting the men to work at the capstan.

“Now then, ye lubberly niggers,” the skipper was roaring wrathfully, “when we heave ahead on our cable you get your bloody craft clear in smart order, or I’ll show ye how to do it in a way you’ll not fancy!”

A chorus of shrill cries made answer from the deck of the dhow; but Tredgar, cursing himself for having been asleep, suddenly realized that now he was not gagged, and in wild fear he lifted his voice:

“Look out, Cairn! Parrish—treachery——”

The shout reached the skipper, for it caused him to whirl suddenly; then it was cut off by the sharp crack of a rifle, and another, while the rush of feet sounded through the dhow as if the majority of her crew had been hiding below.

Cairn’s quick movement saved him, something tearing his cap away as he turned, and he made a quick leap for the chart-house. Durant looked around at the same instant, but a great splotch of red appeared under his right shoulder-blade, and he pitched out through the jagged gap in the yacht’s bulwarks. Tredgar saw his cap floating against the side.

There came a wild shrill yell from the dhow, a score of rifles cracked, and forward, along the passages of the yacht, pattered the sandalled boarders. Short as the warning had been, however, the lanky Dobbins had jumped at the first shot, and now he appeared at the companion-door with an armful of rifles, which he flung along the deck forward, his bellow rising high over the uproar.

“Lay aft for ammunition! Bring them capstan-bars!”

Two of the men had gone down, but the others grasped his meaning; before the rifles could be loaded the Arabs would be on top of them. While Dobbins sent a stream of rifles and broken out cartridges shooting up the deck, four or five men jerked out capstan bars and met the headlong rush of the Arabs on the port side of the yacht; the starboard side was beyond Tredgar's view, but he heard the voice of Captain Cairn mingled with the staccato reports of an automatic, and knew that the starboard side was safe.

For a brief moment the men, swinging the terrible capstan-bars, that crushed bones or skulls like paper, threatened to drive the whole force of invaders overboard again. Just as the Arabs were breaking, however, Jerry Sloog and Parrish, rifles in hand, calmly perched on the after-rail of the yacht, directly in front of Tredgar, and began picking off the yacht's men. Following this example, the Arabs used their rifles, and the way forward lay clear to them.

But by this time the yacht's crew, what was left of it, was in fighting trim. Under the direction of Dobbins they retired to the shelter of the forward cabins and lounging room, and the fight promised to shift its fortunes again, when a bullet went through the leg of the New Englander.

Dobbins fell forward—he had been firing from the shelter of the companion-ladder—and lay

exposed; in that moment Parrish coolly lifted his rifle and shot the wounded man through the head. The sight was too much for Tredgar, and he reeled away from his post, feeling sick and faint.

When he next looked, spurred to the effort by a snapping burst of shots and wild Arab yells, the scene had changed. The defenders had been driven back, though the boarders had paid dearly for their conquered deck, and Captain Cairn, with half a dozen men, held the bridge and chart-house.

Up forward beside the capstan stood one of the former stokers, a capstan-bar in his hands and hesitancy in his face—a pitiful object, sturdily facing a dozen levelled rifles that ringed him in.

The watching Tredgar saw Parrish nudge Sloop; the latter grinned, threw down his rifle, and ran forward. Absolute bewilderment shot into the poor stoker's face at sight of this white man in Arab dress—and the grinning Sloop had struck.

But where was Mary Grey in this hell of fighting men? No sign of her could Tredgar see, and in blind madness of desperation he tore at his chain until the irons bit into his wrists and dripped blood.

Now, whether he was stronger than most men, or whether, as is more likely, the staples had been weakened by age and by his efforts of that same morning, out they came; his handcuffs were still on, but he could be free of his prison, and lost no time in getting so. As the door leading into

the cabin behind was unlocked, he was soon standing on the deck of the deserted dhow, and now his feverish impatience gave way to caution. He must find a weapon and he must find Mary Grey; nothing else mattered.

Cairn was making good his defence of the bridge, it seemed; but Tredgar gave little heed to the fight. He could find no weapon on the empty deck of the dhow, and so in desperation went to the bulwarks and clambered up the stern railing of the yacht and over.

The only man in sight was Parrish, calmly reloading his rifle a dozen feet away. He had not heard Tredgar's approach, and with madness upon him the latter leaped forward, his ironed wrists upraised. The renegade sensed the attack and turned, rising; before he could throw up his rifle Tredgar crashed into him, and they rolled in the scuppers together.

Lionel Parrish had not been an adventurer the greater part of his life for nothing, as Tredgar speedily found. Fettered as he was, the latter could only grip his enemy's throat, while Parrish fought like a madman; but Tredgar grimly held to his grip, holding the other so closely to him that Parrish could not strike freely, hampered as he was by the brown *burnous*.

Nonetheless, the renegade twisted up and managed to get on top of Tredgar, his cruel mouth open and his bloodshot eyes staring from that throttling grip that he could not loose. Suddenly

there came a thud, the forked beard went down into the face of Tredgar, and Parrish lay limply in his grasp.

“My Gawd—hit’s ’orrible! I sye, Mr. Tredgar, give us yer ’and!”

Too spent for wonder, Tredgar felt himself pulled up, and looked down into the white face of Jem, the little Cockney steward, who held a revolver by the barrel.

The renegade lay sprawled out, half-conscious, and Tredgar suddenly realized that a dozen Arabs were yelling and rushing down the deck toward them. Sobbing in his fright and horror, the steward pulled him across the deck.

“’Ere—the hafter cabin—Hi ’ave the lydy syfe, sir!”

Roughly shoving Tredgar through a door, the steward turned to empty his weapon at the Arabs; a dozen rifles cracked, and he pitched forward against Tredgar, just inside. Struggling to his elbow, he slammed the heavy door shut and sank back.

“Tell the missus—Hi—yes, sir—will you ’ave the toast buttered, sir——”

So passed Jem the Cockney, his little soul rising to greatness in one final moment before the tears had dried upon his cheeks.

Tredgar, leaning against the cabin wall, found soft hands clasping his and looked down into the eyes of Mary Grey. He collected himself with an

effort and forced a smile, wondering as he did so at the calm, white, but fearless face of the girl.

“A regular penny-dreadful situation, Mary Grey! It—I— Good Heavens, girl, don’t look at me like that! Don’t you know that these Arabs will have no pity?”

She put up both hands to his shoulders and looked him square in the eye.

“I know, Horizon, poor Jem was afraid for me than for himself. Tell me, is the yacht captured? Where have you been? Come, the port is closed and they can’t get in without breaking down the door. Brace up, Horizon!”

Tredgar, shaken to the depths by the scene outside and the still form of Jem at his feet, slowly regained his poise. He lifted his fettered hands until she saw the irons for the first time, and in brief broken sentences outlined his story; before he had finished he was once more himself.

He noted while he talked that no attack was made upon their shelter, and guessed that the Arabs were reviving Parrish. The cabin was a small one, had but one door and one port, and there was no danger for the present, until the door should be broken down. This was the first that Mary Grey had heard of Parrish, for Tredgar had thought little of the renegade until the events of the past few days had brought him to the fore.

“Parrish!” she repeated, frowning. “Lionel Parrish—oh, I remember now! Father was doing

missionary work out in the Philippines and wrote home about him. He was in the Army and was forced to resign——”

“When was all this?” queried the surprised Tredgar.

“Oh, years and years ago—when I was just a little girl! I always remembered it, because father wrote that Parrish was an emissary of Satan, and I used to long to see a real emissary of Satan, for I’d read about them so often. I don’t recall why Parrish was forced to resign, because mother wouldn’t read that part of the letter to me—ah, listen to the quiet!”

Indeed, a sudden terrible silence had fallen over the yacht; no voices of men, no crack of guns could be heard, and it was small wonder that the overwrought girl gave way completely, her brave attempt to conquer her own fears ending in a flood of tears. Tredgar led her to a chair and dropped a small deck-rug over the bullet-torn body of Jem, while still that ominous silence continued outside.

It could only mean one thing, thought the American grimly. Captain Cairn must have fallen; Parrish must have made a clean sweep of the yacht, and the next move would be to make sure of those in the cabin. He looked about for some object to place against the door, but there was nothing available; at the same moment a voice penetrated from outside.

“Inside there, Mr. Tredgar!”

“Well?” snapped the American, recognizing the tones of Parrish. Mary Grey looked up, then rose and came to his side.

“Open the port. I want to have a little chat, if you can spare the time. I might add that the ship is in our hands, and I am anxious to keep you alive for a time.”

“Much obliged, Mr. Renegade.” As Tredgar stepped to the port, Mary Grey stopped him.

“Don’t—they might shoot in, Horizon!”

“All right, Mary Grey; don’t you worry! This fellow has some reason for wanting me as a prisoner, and I fancy’ll he’ll keep his word. Besides, we’re up against it.”

He flung open the port and looked out, half-expecting to receive a bullet despite his show of confidence. Before him on the after-deck were crowded Parrish and his men, a good share of them wounded; at one side, under the guard of Jerry Sloog, were eight of the yacht’s crew, all stretched out on the deck, only two of them unwounded and bound.

Among them stood Captain Cairn. His hands were bound securely; his face was streaked with blood from a bullet-scrrape across his temple; his clothes were torn to ribbons, but he glared up at Sloog with such intensity of hatred that the brute slunk away from him, overawed.

“Any one in there with you, Mr. Tredgar?” inquired Parrish coldly.

“No one but Miss Grey, my passenger.” At the words Tredgar caught a look of relief sweep over Cairn’s face, and met the skipper’s direct gaze.

“So much the better, then. I’m going to scuttle this craft, and I believe the cocks and bath taps are already open; so you’d better hurry.”

“Don’t mind us; I guess we’d sooner be here than with you, at that. Go right ahead. I’ve got a couple of automatics in here, and you’ll have a bit of fun breaking in.”

Tredgar lied cheerfully, but the words had their effect. Parrish frowned, rubbed his tender throat reflectively, and smiled his cruel smile.

“As I said, my friend, you’re of more value alive than dead to me. I don’t make you any offers on your own account; but if you’ll come out decently, and without making any fuss, this Miss Grey of yours shan’t be molested.”

“I guess I can speak for her when I say that she’d rather go down with the yacht than trust herself to the promises of a hound who was kicked out of his own Army and forced to turn renegade.”

Tredgar’s hard, cold, bitter words sent a spasm of rage over the face of the other, which was instantly controlled; but Captain Cairn gave full vent to his delight.

“That’s the talk, sir! Give the bloody dog a bullet, by scrag, and you’ll save the hangman trouble, sir! If it wasn’t for the lady in there I’d be glad to give my opinion of him. Ye might close the port a bit, Mr. Tredgar——”

“That’ll do!” Parrish swung on Cairn with a look which, while the skipper paid back stare for stare, silenced even his unbridled tongue. “I warned you once, Cairn,” went on the renegade hoarsely; “and if it wasn’t for the fun you’re going to have dying, sweating out your life over walls and down in the quarry, I’d shoot you where you stand.”

“Shoot and be darned, you dog!” retorted the skipper icily, forgetting Mary Grey in his outburst of fury. Parrish, however, merely smiled his sardonic smile and turned back toward the open port.

“Better listen to reason, Tredgar. See here—you know well enough that I’m a Moslem, and if you please to call it renegade, well and good; but I’ll swear on the Koran and on the Prophet that if you give up, no man shall lay a hand on your lady in there except by her own free will. I can’t set her free for obvious reasons; as for you, I’ll say frankly that you’ve no fun ahead—as you’ll see for yourself.”

Tredgar turned and looked at Mary Grey. “Do you want to chance it?” he said simply.

She hesitated as their eyes met, then with a wan smile put her hand out to his.

“It’s our only chance, Horizon, and—and I don’t want you to die!”

Not until later did Tredgar comprehend the import of those words. His face set hard, and, still holding her hand in his, he pushed the body of Jem aside with his foot and flung the door open.

It was a very silent party of conquerors which led their captives back to the dhow, Tredgar being unironed and bound like the rest. Half the Arabs had gone down in that desperate conflict, and as the great brown sail creaked up, Tredgar and Cairn, standing together, looked back at the settling *Spindrift*, her decks red in the sunset. Suddenly, the little skipper choked and turned away.

“We should have inspected that bally propeller-shaft at Port Said,” he remarked, and gazed dry-eyed at the channel ahead. But Tredgar understood that his thoughts were not on the propeller-shaft.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE GATE OF FAREWELL

“By scrag, I never yet agreed with Schopenhauer’s statement that the best part of life is its brevity; but I’m blessed if I’m not beginning to think he was right, Mr. Tredgar! Of course, it’s said that the uses of adversity——”

“Oh, curse the uses of adversity!” groaned Tredgar irritably out of the darkness; and after that the silence settled down once more. Suddenly, there came the creaking of hinges, a gleam of light, and three men appeared with lanterns.

Casting a glance at the tall American, two of these went to Cairn and examined the wounds of the haggard-faced skipper, exchanged a few words of satisfaction, and stood up.

For three days Tredgar had been in the mysterious Bab el Woda’a, the Gate of Farewell. On the morning after the capture of the *Splndrift* the prisoners had been carefully blindfolded, the dhow running in toward what seemed a dangerous stretch of sandy islets with high rocky hills behind.

Tredgar heard the sail rattle down, and the breeze had stopped abruptly. Then had come the

unmistakable *puff-puff-puff* of a launch, twenty minutes of sweltering heat and confused noise, and Parrish coldly ordered the captives to get up and be led.

A muffled detonation had startled Tredgar, but caused no comment from the Arabs around, while he thought he could hear the rattle of donkey-engines and the whir of steam-hoists, though he might have been mistaken.

Then he had been led into the shadow of cool rock and darkness, until the bandage was taken off and he found himself in this little cell with Captain Cairn.

"I mind," said the skipper stiffly, while the three Arabs talked together, "that once a chap told me how secret society talk was all rot, and how we weren't living in the days of chain mail and poisoned daggers. I'll thank ye to correct me, Mr. Tredgar, if I'm mistaken."

"You win, old man," laughed Tredgar. "I didn't mean to be grouchy about it. Eh? Want to examine me for your life-insurance society? All right."

The two who had attended to Cairn's hurts had approached Tredgar, but there was every evidence of respect in their attitude, and one spoke in broken English:

"Beg pardons, effendi! You are eef you please to go wit' us?"

"Who—me?" asked Tredgar.

They nodded emphatically, and Cairn slowly rose to his feet, hand outstretched.

“Good-bye, sir,” he said morosely. “My turn next, I take it. Well, we’ve had a bloody rotten cruise, and no mistake, Mr. Tredgar, but here’s luck in the next world!”

“Oh, not so bad as that, I hope,” Tredgar returned a little shakily, gripping the skipper’s hand hard. “Good-bye, old man—but I guess this is no firing-squad.”

Turning, he followed the Arabs outside and waited while they closed the heavy door and shot the bolts home. Then all four proceeded up a winding stone passage, with other doors on one side—and emerged into the blinding sunlight of morning.

For a few moments Tredgar covered his face, unable to face the glare; but gradually his eyes became accustomed to it until he was able to look around him, blinking. When at last he took in the scene he stood transfixed, a cry of wonder breaking from him involuntarily.

This was no barren stretch of sand and rock about him. Instead, he was standing in a gateway of hewn stone, set in the side of the hill. Before him lay a cluster of low stone buildings, and beyond that a long narrow harbour parallel with the coast and only separated from the Red Sea by a high rocky tongue of land, forming a perfect shelter for the vessels inside.

Vessels there were—a score of dhows, the grey tramp Tredgar had first seen at Gibraltar, several launches, and, wonder of wonders, a dredge, which was busy at the upper end of the harbour.

A long quay of rubble and stone afforded a busy scene, the grey tramp being in the midst of unloading, while near the quay were wide warehouses, all of the same hard grey stone.

Wonderful as it was, however, Tredgar's gaze swept past it all as a deep rumble and a cloud of dust drew his attention to the head of the port, five hundred yards to his right.

Here, in the solid face of a grey cliff, half a hundred men were at work quarrying out rock. Some were pushing tram-cars along a miniature railroad which ran clear around the harbour to the tongue of rocks; others were working steam-winchies; but all were chained, and their labours were directed by men in brown *burnouses* who carried heavy whips.

As he looked, Tredgar heard another blast from the narrow rock-tongue on the left of the port, and saw where other men were working along the line of cliffs.

He gazed in bewilderment and hardly realized what all this portended until a tram, pushed by ten chained men, rumbled past below him. Then horror struck into his heart, for three of the ten slaves looked up—and he knew them for men who had been of the *Spindrifft's* crew.

More, on a car reposed a long black object which

even his eyes recognized as a heavy six-inch gun, and as it rumbled away toward the sheltering rock-tongue Tredgar knew why those men were at work on the desolate hills, and why the grey tramp was winching out those tremendous packing-cases. El Woda'a was being fortified.

Turning, he saw a few hundred yards to his left, lying in shelter of the hills, a large but low stone building with a gay awning stretched at the end overlooking the harbour, and figures beneath it. The whole scene came to him in a moment, and when his guides saw that he was fully able to stand the sunlight, one of them plucked at his sleeve and led him across the bare sizzling rock toward the awning.

Drawing near, he recognized the figures as those of Parrish and half a dozen others, seated about tables which were covered with plans; two of the men wore the same brown robes as their leader, but the rest were dressed in flowing white, with fezes above.

Parrish looked up as the dazed Tredgar approached, and motioned him to a chair. The American obeyed silently, for the immensity of this thing had overcome him completely, and with his thin-lipped smile the renegade addressed him, after a word from the guard.

“So, Mr. Tredgar, you have found the mysterious El Woda'a at last! And may your host inquire how you like it?”

“It's wonderful!” murmured Tredgar, gazing

out at the nucleus of a town which stretched down to the harbour quay. "I can't realize that it's real—the thing is stupendous, here on this coast."

"I am glad you appreciate its importance, my friend. Just now I am excessively busy with my engineers, as you can see. We have quite a difficult problem to solve in getting our newest defences into shape on the seaward side without attracting undesirable attention. So, as you seem to be in need of cleansing, I'll just turn you over to Ahmed for an hour."

He struck a small gong, and a tall, semi-naked Nubian appeared from the building behind. After exchanging a few words, Parrish directed Tredgar to go with the negro, and the American obeyed in helpless bewilderment, catching sight of a smile on the faces of the men about the tables as he passed. But there was nothing reassuring in that smile; rather, it was as if the men had smiled in the same way before, as if they were tolerantly amused at something he could not see, as if he was a child brought out to entertain them; and it angered Tredgar to the depth of his soul.

Following his guide, he entered the building and was led through rooms and corridors that bewildered him afresh. The stone walls were hung with rugs and kilims, the floors were softened by palace-carpets; save for bookcases, there was nothing European about the furnishings, and, as he afterwards learned, the Senussiyeh frowned on all such inventions of the infidel, save as regarded science and defence.

The negro Ahmed, who spoke no English, paused before a door and clapped his hands, at which two more Nubians appeared, and Tredgar was led into a small but complete bathing establishment.

He was given an extremely thorough Turkish bath, was rubbed and kneaded from head to foot, was finally shaven, and provided with a soft white *burnous*, and went forth a new man, physically and mentally.

Indeed, it seemed to him as if he had sloughed all the past, and when he rejoined Parrish under the awning outside, and sat down to lunch, his brain was clear and keen, his dazed bewilderment had vanished, and he was in shape to make the fight he fully expected.

But none came. For the nonce, Parrish played the host and played it excellently, even to furnishing Tredgar with a box of cigars and telling him that a room had been assigned to him in the "palace" behind. Not until the coffee was served did the renegade offer any explanation; then he leaned back in his chair and surveyed his captive coolly.

"I suppose you are wondering about all this, Mr. Tredgar," with a wave of his hand toward the scene around. It was no longer busy, for in the terrific heat of the Arabian noonday no human being could endure the exertion of labour. "Also about my treatment of you. Well, I must admit that it is a special favour in a way."

“And I must admit that I admire you, Parrish. Mind, I don’t like you, and I have absolutely no respect for you as a renegade and murderer; but my personal feeling aside, I think you’re a wonder to accomplish all this. Whether you’ll get away with it or not is another thing.”

“It’s not so bad,” and for a moment the brown eyes looked dreamily away, over the silent cliffs and the deserted harbour where only a few guards stood in sight. “And I’ll get away with it, Tredgar; it’s a cinch. When you have practically unlimited money, men, and brains behind you, things are easily done. I suppose you’ve guessed the secret?”

“The Senussiyeh,” nodded Tredgar, on his guard instantly. “I heard of the society, and Cairn and I doped out your connection with it quite a while ago.”

“Lots of folks have done that, Tredgar, but they’ve never got anything on me, and never will. Now here’s the situation. I want certain information from you, and I might get it by using the water-cure or the thumbscrew on you; but from the set of your jaw I have my doubts, so I’m trying another method.

“For three days you are my guest; you shall do what you will, go where you will—under reasonable guard—and all I ask is your parole for that time.

“At the third sunset you will know more than I could tell you in a year—you will know what this place means and the power behind it; you will know what you can expect if you are no longer a

guest, and I will then ask for what I want. That is all. I don't believe in torture except as a last resort, and I fancy you'll come around."

"Where's Mary Grey?" demanded Tredgar bluntly.

"In one wing of the palace, with a couple of Arab women to attend to her. I'll keep my promise, but you aren't allowed to speak to her or to the slaves. Now—your parole?"

Tredgar gave it.

In the hours that followed he almost forgot what had gone before.

Parrish was courteous, hospitable, friendly; his cold manner never warmed, but it never froze into enmity; and in those three days of calm Tredgar came to comprehend the indomitable power of this man who had cast off all human ties save the bond of the order he served.

And the renegade served faithfully; always the first to reach the little mosque where the men assembled at each prayer-hour, always willing to discuss matters of the faith with the unwashed Sayyids, those innumerable holy men of the prophet's blood who cumber the East, always devout to the point of fanaticism, he seemed to Tredgar to be playing no part, but to be acting out in sober earnest the drama of Islam.

The man had prophesied truly in his words to the American. Tredgar saw sights in that broiling, half-built stronghold which he had never dreamed could exist outside of hell itself.

When a brawny Greek slave in the quarry struck down a guard and tried vainly to shoot himself with the Arab's rifle, Tredgar saw the man tortured before his fellows until those who had been of the *Spindrifst's* crew screamed out in their horror—and this was but a sample.

The wretchedness of these slaves, all Greek or Italian or of the Mediterranean littoral except for the eight British from the yacht, turned his soul sick within him; but he was helpless, and wondered if they reviled him for not being as one of them.

The morning after he was released he witnessed the coming forth of Captain Cairn. Parrish himself, with a dozen aids, gathered to watch with keen anticipation. As the little skipper came from the doorway of the cave-like prisons he was blinded as Tredgar had been; when he could look around, however, there was little bewilderment in his manner.

He very calmly walked up to one of the guards, sent the man sprawling with a blow, caught up his rifle and shot him where he lay, backed into the gateway and prepared to hold his position.

He might have done so had not an Arab come from the darkness of the cave behind and overpowered him. Firmly chained to a haggard Maltese, at length, he was bidden shove at a car of rubble headed for the quay; no sooner were his hands free, than Cairn picked a ten-pound rock from the car, smashed a turbaned skull with it, and proceeded to send smaller fragments whizzing among

the guards until he was finally knocked on the head with the butt of a rifle. Then he was picked up, unchained, and taken back to his cell, unconscious but unconquered.

To his surprise, Tredgar found that these fezzed aids of Parrish's were graduates from every university of Europe. Their books, scientific works in every language, were strewn through the palace cases, and when he inspected the work they had done he began to conceive for the first time what a bomb the Senussiyeh was launching into the world.

On the hills behind the small harbour and on the rock-tongue protecting it, shell-proof casements had been blasted out of the solid rock; two six-inch disappearing rifles were in position, another was going into place, and half a dozen smaller guns were ready for use.

On the seaward side the approach was further guarded by a maze of sandy islets, while the hills around the harbour completely commanded the approach from the other hills toward the desert. When the guns for which places were ready should be in position, El Woda'a would be wellnigh impregnable. At least, so it seemed to Allan Tredgar.

The garrison, who were also the builders, numbered nearly a thousand, Tredgar guessed roughly, and the slaves half that number; many of the latter were negroes who had been shipped over from Egypt or Eritrea.

The whole affair denoted the most thorough organization. Parrish, the Mokaddem or governor

of the place, was awarded implicit obedience by his officers, and these in turn kept perfect discipline; Tredgar saw one man given twenty lashes for failing to salute an engineer after receiving an order, and realized that the Senussiyeah was in truth a militant brotherhood.

Jerry Sloog appeared to be general overseer of the quarry—and a very proper place it was for the man. He saluted Tredgar with a glowering stare when they met, and the American's fists clenched as Sloog deliberately brought down his whip over one of the *Spindrifft* men; but Tredgar restrained himself and passed on, biting his lips in fury.

So the three days of grace drew to an end. Tredgar wondered vainly and often as to what information Parrish wished to extract from him, but the renegade did not refer to the matter again. In fact, Tredgar did not see much of him during the last two days, for one of the guns being unshipped from the grey tramp had slipped over into the harbour and refused to be rescued, so that Parrish and his engineers had their hands full.

Tredgar had a small but comfortable room, cooled by an electric fan, with books and magazines galore; but he spent little time there.

He usually dined with Parrish and his aids, all of whom were very courteous, very affable, and very cruel about the eyes, as if they were sons of one brood. And so, in fact, they were, sons of the Senussiyeah, and the more to be feared for their very smiling politeness.

On the third evening, Tredgar received a note from Parrish, ordering him to dine in his room and to remain there until sent for. That evening, the American bathed and dressed in his white *burnous*, and beneath the flowing folds he secured a naked knife which he had found among the rocks by the harbour that morning.

Whatever chanced, he decided grimly, Lionel Parrish would precede him on the last trail. Then he opened a magazine and quietly read until one of the aids opened the door.

“Will you come with me, Mr. Tredgar? The Mokaddem is waiting.”

Tredgar smiled; beneath the folds of his robe his fingers closed on the knife, and at the door he fell in between two guards and was led swiftly down the main corridor of the palace. The end was at hand.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW TREDGAR FOUND HIS BROTHER

The room into which Tredgar was ushered was as forbidding as it was austere. It was very large; soft electric bulbs cast light from above, and the walls of grey stone were adorned only with huge black Arabic texts, doubtless from the Koran.

Seated on a cushion and rug in the centre of one wall was Parrish; about him were standing his officers, while ranged around the room were the khuan or brothers of the Order, each clad in a crown *burnous* like that of Parrish, and each standing with rifle at rest. At the renegade's right stood Jerry Sloog, lowering, menacing.

"Got the stage all set for me," thought Tredgar as he entered. There was a trace of contempt in the glance he flung around the silent ranks of men, for he knew that the only person in all that assemblage who was really capable of inspiring fear was the man who sat on the cushion and whose brown eyes roved ceaselessly about from beneath his *burnous*-hood.

Nonetheless, Tredgar felt no fear of him; man to man, brain to brain, he knew himself for

the better, and he strode up to the edge of the rug with his level gaze holding that of the renegade in subtle challenge.

“You needn’t try any hypnotizing on me,” he said with a sneer, before Parrish could speak. “If you want anything, spit it out.”

Two weeks before, under the same circumstances, Tredgar’s defiance would have slowly evaporated beneath the steady gaze of Parrish; but now he gave look for look, and the grey-green eyes shot back the flame of the hard brown ones unflinchingly, until the renegade must have read in the them story of Tredgar’s awakening.

“Mr. Tredgar,” came the cold, inflexible voice that held no note of human emotion, “to you this may seem very theatrical. I fear that it is necessary to impress you with the fact that Islam is no longer a name; that these men are above fear.”

He turned and said a few words in Arabic. One of the brown-clad men stepped from the ranks, handed his rifle to an aid, and saluted. Parrish drew a revolver from his *burnous* and handed it to Sloop, who stepped across and held it out. The Arab took it, looked at Parrish with a strange ecstasy in his fanatical eyes, and said a single word:

“Allah!”

Then, placing the revolver to his head, he pulled the trigger.

Tredgar turned with a cry of horror as the weapon crashed out and the brown figure fell; but from

the men around there swelled up a low murmur as of praise, and every voice joined in the Saying of Unity, the Kalima or creed of the Moslem:

“There is but one God and Mohammed is the prophet of God. Praised be Allah, the compassionate, the all-merciful.”

The American gripped his hidden knife hard, and stood still; beneath his supreme effort at self-control the sweat poured from his brow, but he said no word and looked into the hard brown eyes of his enemy. At one side a man was busy writing in a large book.

“The name of Mamdan ibn Sef, on the books of the grand lodge at Jof, will bear the title of blessed,” said Parrish slowly and quietly.

He seemed to take it for granted that Tredgar knew of the order, or else he did not care to explain his words further. “Now, my friend, I have not sacrificed a fighting-man for nothing, I trust. I have tried to deal gently with you and to impress you with the fact that the Senussiyeh is not to be trifled with or denied; you are not a man to be forced, Tredgar, except as a last resort, and I want you to appreciate the fact that I——”

“Give back life to Ala’adin ibn Hassan,” broke in Tredgar impassively, “and to the men you murdered on the yacht, and to this man here—then come to me with your talk of mercy. You don’t fool me, Parrish; not a bit. I know well enough that your dirty soul holds about as much

pity as the proverbial stone, and you'll never let me out of here after what I've seen and heard. Your theatricals don't impress me in the least, so you needn't waste any more time. I haven't the ghost of an idea what you want out of me, and there's no use beating around the bush any longer. Get down to cases and cut out the comic-opera effects."

"Very well, Mr. Tredgar. First, I presume you have some idea as to why this place is being built and fortified? Within five years the East Coast of Africa will be Moslem; Egypt will be once more governed from Arabia, and the powers will find that the crescent has come into its own again. At present there is just one obstacle, and that obstacle is Abyssinia. Did you ever hear of the British expedition to Magdala?"

"I have read of it," answered Tredgar, puzzled. "That was back in the 'sixties, when King Theodore fell, wasn't it?"

"Correct. When Magdala was taken there was great disappointment over the small quantity of loot compared to what had been expected. A few trifling things were obtained and are now in the British Museum; but the greatest treasures of all were gone. These consisted of certain gifts made to the Queen of Sheba by King Solomon——"

"Look here," interjected Tredgar hotly; "I said to cut out the comedy, didn't I? Now just remember that you're not talking to your credulous niggers, Parrish, and talk sense. Forget

this Queen of Sheba business. What do you want?"

"I am talking sense, sir, as you know very well," replied Parrish, with a flash of anger. "I want no more of your impudence, and you'll listen to what I have to say, after which I'll listen to you."

Tredgar obeyed, for the renegade was plainly in sober earnest, and heard the explanation of Parrish with unmixed wonder. When Magdala had fallen, certain members of the Senussiyeh had managed to collect the treasure—which legend assigned to the Queen of Sheba—a ring given her by King Solomon, a sceptre, certain manuscripts of the Hebrew writings, and jewelled trinkets.

"With these the brethren of the order had fled to the coast, where they had run foul of a party of British soldiers; the latter had appropriated the treasure and fled in a small boat, which was wrecked on the Arabian coast near the present El Woda'a. All but two had died of thirst and hunger; but two had been picked up by a coasting dhow—without the treasure.

"One died in London under torture," concluded Parrish; "for the agents of the order are many. Before he died he confessed that the treasure had been hidden away, refusing to reveal the place. The other we lost track of in America."

"But what's the game?" demanded Tredgar, half-believing that there was something in the wild story. "You don't need money——"

“No, but we need Abyssinia—and we of the true faith reverence King Solomon as well as the Abyssinian tribes do. Once we have those objects, the moral effect will be tremendous, for their intrinsic worth is little; the legend connected with them renders them of untold value to us through the entire Moslem world.

“They form a link in our chain, Mr. Tredgar—a link which we have squandered millions to get, and which can be furnished by only two men. Only two men know—and I am prepared to offer you any sum you name in return for the secret of the hiding-place of this treasure.”

The American stared blankly for a moment, until it flashed over him that Parrish must have some ulterior object. This yarn was too improbable, too wild, he thought; though certainly the aims of the Senussiyeh, as expressed by the renegade, fitted in with what he had learned from Ala'adin.

“I think you're labouring under some delusion, Parrish,” he said quietly, smiling. The eyes of those standing around were searching his face, and he remembered that most of the aids spoke English. “I never heard that yarn before, and if you're in earnest about it, then you've been running on a blind trail; it's all news to me.”

“Don't lie to me!” and there was a savage undernote to the voice of Parrish. “Five years ago, your brother in America got hold of this thing from the former soldier who had escaped, and

who died soon after telling your brother of the secret; so much one of your agents learned at Suez from your brother himself, when he lay ill with fever and babbled of the matter.

“After that we took care of him ourselves, though I must say that we had little success; that is why I knew torture would fail with you. But his papers went back to you, and we were unable to get hold of them; we were busied with other matters, and thought it only a matter of time until he would give up the secret. Then you came out here—and *now you’ll talk!*”

The frantic impulse came over Tredgar to send his knife home through that brown *burnous*. He trembled with fury as he heard the cool quiet story of how his brother had been “taken care of” and tortured; but the last words, flung at him with savage intensity, seemed to settle every ounce of his rage into cold strength, and he knew that he was master of himself again.

“Where is my brother now?” he asked hoarsely.

“Alive, my dear fellow, and just at present in very good health. He learned a great many things about his own body; but he had a strong constitution. For the past few months we’ve been trying the dark cells, but without effect. Now—I’m waiting.”

Tredgar drew himself up, his hand gripping his knife, and his voice rang out clear and firm in the dead silence that hung heavy upon the room.

“Parrish, you and I are very much alike; the only difference is that you’re a black-hearted renegade and I’m a Christian—a poor enough one, but my creed is the creed of my fathers—and I’d see you damned before I’d help your dirty work along. In any case, I know nothing of this business; there was nothing in my brother’s papers about it, and I merely came out here on the chance of finding him.

“I didn’t even know what he was after himself, and if there’s anything in this yarn of yours, then he’s the only one who can give up the secret. That’s straight goods, my man. I’ve lied in my time, but never to a dirty dog like you; so put that in your pipe and smoke it.”

Both hands beneath his *burnous*, he stood waiting. Parrish leaned forward on his cushions, gazing intently at the American; from the aids on either hand came angry glances and a low growl that died away instantly.

The eyes of the renegade burned like live coals beneath his brown hood, and the slumbering devil in the man was roused into life; Tredgar calculated the distance between them and tensed his muscles for the spring; but the time had not yet come.

“I believe you, Mr. Tredgar.” The half-sneering formality was full of menace. “I believe you, and it seems that for once I have barked up the wrong tree. But not entirely—no, not entirely; the ways of God are immutable, my friend, and

the fate of man is written on his forehead. Look at the wall opposite—at that iron ring.”

Tredgar turned, and set in the stone wall on the other side of the great room he saw a heavy iron ring set eight feet from the floor, from which hung leathern straps.

“I could very easily bring in this brother of yours and tie him to that ring—ah! The very thing!”

Parrish broke off abruptly and his white teeth flashed out cruelly. He hissed out a swift order in Arabic, and before Tredgar could turn, two gigantic negroes, naked save for loin-cloths, had sprung forward and seized his arms.

In vain he tried to twist free, to get the hidden knife into play, to use his fists; he was as helpless in that grip as if he were a child. The renegade watched, a flicker of interest in his face.

Another sharp order, and the negroes stripped the loose *burnous* from Tredgar. One of them pulled out the knife and flung it to the floor with a guttural exclamation, which was echoed by the men standing around, and Jerry Sloog started forward. Parrish waved him back, still smiling.

“So, my friend, you were prepared, eh? I wondered why those hands of yours were fingering something under the robe! Very good, very good! You are quite a dangerous fellow in your line, Mr. Tredgar; but the ways of Allah are wonderful!”

He turned and beckoned Jerry Sloog. The

square-shouldered brute slunk forward, his eyes shifting about uneasily. Tredgar, his lean face thrust a little outward, stood helpless in the grip of the Nubians, wondering if Parrish intended to utilize his executioner.

Sloog puzzled him. He remembered their first meeting among the rocks, when the murderer had struck down the half-caste with that one terrible blow, and had then knelt over the body in a frenzy of remorse that was certainly real enough; but the brutality of the man had been in evidence during the fight aboard the *Spindrifft*, and in the quarry of El Woda'a itself. Now Sloog stood before Parrish, eyes downcast.

"You were very eager a moment ago, Jerry, so now I'll give you a chance for some work that you'll like. Go get your big whip and bring in Number Fifteen."

Sloog made a clumsy salute, then looked up at Parrish for the first time.

"I ain't no monk," he growled out. "Master, gimme that girl we took off'n the yacht. I want her."

"Oh, you want her, eh?" smiled Parrish tolerantly. "No, you don't want her, Jerry. By the way, Mr. Tredgar, I've been talking to Miss Grey. I find that she's the daughter of an old friend of mine, the Rev. Peter Grey. Quite a joke, eh? Reverend gent would be quite shocked to know she was with me. No, Jerry, you don't want her. I'll keep her myself."

“You devil!” groaned Tredgar, twisting in his fury until he dragged the Nubians a pace or two toward the renegade. “You devil! You swore on the Koran——”

One of the aids stepped out with a frown, for Parrish’s remark seemed to have caused a wave of consternation among those of the Arabs who understood.

The aid addressed his master stiffly, and Tredgar saw all eyes fixed on Parrish, who swiftly rose to his feet and murmured something to Sloog. Jerry turned and vanished from the room.

Parrish was furiously angry, that was plain. The officer who had addressed him turned deadly pale as the renegade stormed in Arabic, but stood his ground firmly; the rest shrank back as Parrish turned on them and lashed them with his cold biting voice; and whatever the cause of the scene was, Tredgar saw that Parrish had his men in deadly fear of him. Then he saw why.

Parrish hissed out a single word at the aid and raised a hand. Through the chamber echoed that same muffled “*pung-g-g*” which had sounded at the death of Ala’adin, and the aid sank down where he stood, blood on his forehead.

As a stifled cry rose from the others, Parrish resumed his seat calmly; Tredgar knew then why Sloog had left the room—doubtless to gain some hidden chamber whence he could handle his rifle with its silencer.

Even though he knew the cause, and though

others there must know it also, the death of the aid was frightfully silent and sudden, and Tredgar felt a little shudder of horror. Parrish coldly ordered the body carried out, then turned to the American.

“You see that the Senussiyeh has invisible executioners, Mr. Tredgar, though I apprehend that your superior intelligence is not at a loss in the matter. As to Miss Grey, you are quite right. I swore on the Koran, and I keep my oaths, but I swore that no man should lay a hand on her save with *her own consent*. You recall? Then I leave it to your imagination to guess how her consent could be obtained. Some of these officers of mine”—and his brown eyes swept coldly around—“imagine that I, a Mokaddem of the Senussiyeh, would break my monastic vows; but they should remember that our father, Senussi, can grant exemption to whom he wishes.”

“You’ll pay!” said Tredgar very softly, though the veins stood out on his temples. “You’ll pay! Lionel Parrish—you’ll pay! Remember that. You may think that everything’s going fine for you, but you’ll pay. Call off your hell-hounds and meet me with bare fists, you cowardly dog, and I’ll wipe that smirk off your mug!”

“Thanks, Mr. Tredgar; but I’m no brute of a prize-fighter like Jerry. I’ve learned to use my head and I’ve risen above the brute level to which you seem to have sunk. Strange how man will revert to his own, at times, isn’t it?” he added

pleasantly. "I could almost feel danger in you, Tredgar, until you begin to talk of bare fists. That sounds like the little demon Cairn; it's really very amusing. Just the same, I'll compliment you to the extent of saying that I'd like to have a dozen men of your calibre behind me here. I could make a man out of you in time."

"Oh, you could!" snarled Tredgar furiously. "Well, you won't get away with this thing, you fiend! You just wait till John Solomon——"

He broke off abruptly. The brown eyes had narrowed viciously, the forked beard shot out, the slim brown hands gripped the *burnous* of camel's hair until the knuckles stood out white.

"Yes?" murmured the renegade with terrible softness. "Yes? So John Solomon is going to enter the game, is he? My friend, I am going to make you talk—later. When you're broken by sun and whips, when your soul is dried up in you by thirst, when you can smell your own flesh rotting with the acids, when I give you the choice between talking or seeing Mary Grey in the arms of Sloog—I think you'll talk, eh?"

Tredgar's endurance gave way, and he wrenched toward Parrish with his brain aflame. One of the Nubians took him by the throat, and he sank his teeth in the man's arm to the bone, kicking, twisting, fighting to get at that sardonic calm figure on the cushion.

Then he felt other hands grasp him, pull him back; there came a tinkle of metal, and irons clicked

about his wrists as he was dragged, sobbing and gasping in his futile rage, toward the farther wall.

For five minutes, silence ensued. His arms up, shackled to the iron ring in the wall above, Tredgar stood beneath the light of one of the hanging lamps, while whispers filled the hall behind him.

Stripped as he was, his body revealed its strength in every line of the powerful shoulders, flat hips, heaving chest; his face, lifted to the pitiless grey wall, spelled strength, for all its bitter agony of spirit, and it was small wonder that the watching soldiers who filled the wide room gazed on him and spoke beneath their breath in admiration.

Suddenly came a sound of feet and metal on stone. Twisting about, Tredgar saw Jerry Sloop enter the doorway on his right, heavy whip in hand. Behind, came two more negroes, and between them a shackled object that had once been a man.

The face was hidden in a tangle of unkempt grey hair; one leg dragged haltingly, and the figure moved forward blindly, scrawny arms lifted up across its eyes as if to shut out the light.

Slowly the four moved across the room until Tredgar could see them no longer, and knew that they had stopped before Parrish. A moment later the calm even voice of the renegade sounded:

“So this is Number Fifteen? I have just made a very interesting discovery, Number Fifteen; one that will afford you great satisfaction. You

have a visitor! Yes, don't stare at me that way; a gentleman has come a long way to meet you. There he is, under that iron ring you have so often decorated yourself. Oh, Mr. Tredgar! Turn around, if you please, and meet your brother—R. J., I think his initials are, or were. Pardon the informality of the occasion, Number Fifteen.”

CHAPTER XV

THE SENUSSIYEH WINS

Tredgar did not turn round, but leaned forward against the wall, his heart sick within him. He had needed no word from Parrish to pierce beneath the disguise of filth and neglect, for that gesture as of shutting out the light had been an old trick of his brother's, and he had known it at once.

He was past being horrified at anything now. In a vague way he had been prepared for some such sight as this, but as he leaned his brow against the cold stone there was a fearful agony in his brain. Why had he not seized his first chance and leaped on Parrish?

“Allan, here—God in heaven, it can't be!”

The hoarse feeble words pierced his consciousness, and with a little groan he pushed back from the wall and twisted about. At sight of his haggard face the bent figure of Number Fifteen straightened itself up, and through the mask of matted grey beard and hair Allan met his brother's eyes. Then Number Fifteen slumped together again.

“What?” came the cold tone of Parrish. “No words for such a meeting? Two affectionate brethren come together after five long years, and neither speaks? We’ll have to wake ’em up, Jerry. Give that fellow under the ring a touch.”

Tredgar could not see Sloog, but he heard a step, and something whistled in the air; then the whip coiled about his naked body like a snake of living fire, and he drew himself up with a shudder, bowing his head and clenching his teeth in grim determination to let no sound out of his tortured body.

Again the whip whistled; again it burned into him, and something warm trickled down over his legs. He heard the lash flick back for the third stroke, but it did not fall; instead, there came a dull thudding sound, and Jerry Sloog stumbled forward against the wall, sank down chokingly, and lay quiet.

One low growl broke from the men around Parrish, and as Tredgar swung about on his chains he saw what had happened.

Number Fifteen had been crouching near the knife taken from Tredgar by the Nubians and flung to the floor. All eyes had been fixed on Sloog and Tredgar, and Number Fifteen had not only absorbed the weapon, but had edged in closer to Sloog. Then, lifting the heavy-bladed knife in both his manacled hands, he had sent it hurtling into the man’s back without a word.

Tredgar looked about, to face a ring of levelled

rifles, and as these were lowered at a sharp command from Parrish he saw a startling transformation in Number Fifteen. The bent figure raised itself erect, the lowered head flung back its tangle of hair, the dragging foot came into place beside the other, and a voice that might have been Tredgar's own rang out clear over the uproar of shuffling feet and voices which had filled the hall.

“Done! Now shoot, you dirty scum!”

Parrish pushed forward, harshly ordering the Arabs to fall back. He was obeyed at once, and stood facing Number Fifteen, his constant smile still on his lips.

“So, Tredgar Major, you've been practising a little deception, eh? How do you like the looks of Tredgar Minor just now? He's white and firm and straight, isn't he? Speak, you dog, or I'll have the tongue torn out of you!”

He lost his calm for an instant, maddened by the quiet defiance of Number Fifteen, but not for long.

“Played cripple, didn't you? Well, you've had your fling and you've killed Jerry there——”

His words were stopped by a ghastly interlude. Tredgar saw the huddled bulk of Sloop quiver and lift, as though the cold voice of Parrish had called it to life. Slowly the wide shoulders heaved up, while horrified silence settled on the hall; then a deep voice choked out:

“Poor Jerry Sloop! Poor—Jerry—as never—harm'd a—fly——”

The form settled down suddenly, lifeless. Parrish, startled like the rest, gained swift command of himself and turned back to Number Fifteen.

“Now, Mr. R. J. Tredgar, Esquire, you’ve had your fling, as I said. Had your fling—get the joke? For about five years you’ve been living on the Brotherhood, and if you’d come into my hands in the first place I’d have made short work of you. Now we have a little show-down, you and I. We couldn’t torture that information out of you, could we? Just the same, here you are, a wreck of a man for all your will-power; and here’s a new member of the family, fresh and strong. Get the idea, do you? I’ll work no more on you, my friend; but you know what’s in store for this brother of yours. Ah, that strikes home, eh?”

The matted grey head had suddenly bowed, and Number Fifteen shuddered back into the caricature of a man he had been a few moments before. The cold voice went on, hard and merciless as Nemesis.

“You remember that table in the laboratory, Number Fifteen, where the acids ate down into your body till they were cleansed off with other acids? You remember those little red ants that ate the flesh from your fingers as you watched them? You remember the phonograph that caught your screams and flung them back at you every night till you woke up and lived it all over again? That’s what’s coming to your brother—unless you speak.”

“Bob!” Tredgar’s voice rang out as he saw his brother’s hands go up. “Bob! Don’t tell this devil what he wants to know—let him do what he will, but don’t give in.”

For a moment he looked into his brother’s eyes again, and knew that Parrish had won. The renegade pressed home his advantage insidiously.

“Tell me where that stuff is hidden, Number Fifteen, and to-night you and your brother sleep in the same cell. Think what it means! All the news from home, a whole night to spend with the brother who came so far to find you——”

“God! God!” Number Fifteen swayed forward with a scream and went to his knees. “I’ll tell if you spare him—I’ll tell you the place, you fiend! Don’t torture him! Kill him, but don’t torture him—ah——”

Number Fifteen had fainted.

“Very well, I think that is all for the present.” Parrish could not keep the wave of exultation from his voice, and when he cried out a sentence in Arabic a murmur of fierce delight broke from every throat.

Tredgar leaned against the wall, suddenly feeling sick and weak; looking down at his own body, he saw the great red wales caused by the whip, and felt the slow trickle of blood from his back.

At an order from the renegade, two of the Nubians lifted the form of Number Fifteen and carried it out, followed by an officer. Two more unceremoniously caught the feet of Jerry Sloop and hauled

him away, the knife-haft sticking up from his back and the long whip jerking and trailing out over the stones from his stiffened hand. The sight sent Tredgar into a spasm of sickness, and Parrish ordered him released from the ring in the wall.

As his manacled hands dropped weakly, Parrish caught the glint of the little silver ring which he still wore, and gave a quick order. A negro tore the trinket from Tredgar's unresisting finger and handed it to the renegade, who held it up to the light from the lamp above.

"Strange! Where did you get this, Tredgar? Wake up, you!"

The American looked up, and the haze cleared away from his sight. He knew that Parrish must never know whence that ring had come or what it was, and with a great effort he collected his senses for the struggle.

"It's a bazaar-ring that I bought at Port Said," he answered dully. "You've seen 'em before—twenty piastres—get your name on 'em while you wait."

"Yes, I've seen them before, right enough," rejoined Parrish grimly. "But I never saw one just like this, and these aren't your initials by a long shot."

"The man said they were," lied Tredgar hopelessly. "What are they, then? I don't know Arabic."

"You are a poor liar, Tredgar, for this graving

is the name of Suleiman. Well, we have other business on hand just now, with your worthy brother; there's no great hurry about making you talk, and it's a poor rule that won't work both ways. I think I'll fatten up your brother a bit, then we'll see if you won't talk to keep *him* from the torture."

With which Parrish coolly slipped the ring on his finger and turned away. The scene had been watched closely enough by the soldiers ranged around, and at the Arabic name of Solomon Tredgar half-fancied that swift glances were exchanged among one or two of these, but he was too far gone to give any attention.

Two of the negroes led him out through the corridors, and at the entrance to the palace turned him over to a pair of Arabs who were waiting with lanterns.

The terrific strain under which he had been, the anguish both of mind and body, and the sights which he had witnessed that night had all but unstrung him; he noted dully that he was guided back to the stone gateway in the hillside, and that he was being conducted to the cells in the rock; but he stumbled along without heeding his surroundings, and when at length he was pushed into a cell, he stretched out painfully on the straw litter which covered the floor, and, in spite of the burning red wales about his body, dropped asleep.

Once more he was on the old farm, back at Lake Sunapee, with rugged old Croydon piled up into

the sky above; Bob was with him—the same rosy-cheeked Bob who had bossed him around the farm ever since he could remember—and they were going barefoot through the orchard down to the creek. Bob had the worms, and he had the poles over his shoulder; morning chores were done; there was an hour's fishing ahead, and the enchantment of the fresh spring morning was over them both. Suddenly, as he swung around to throw a stone at a blackbird in the stunted cherry, his flourish of the poles sent a hook into Bob's arm. He saw Bob give a jump, heard his startled cry—

“Allan! Allan, boy—speak to me!”

Tredgar opened his eyes in time to hear the door slam shut. He was in darkness, but there was a figure beside him; hot tears were dropping on his wounds, and Bob's hands were holding his, gripping them hard.

“Bob, old man! I—I was dreaming about the farm——”

The words choked in his throat, and for a space the two men sat silent, their hands clasped. Then slowly and with infinite tenderness, Allan loosened the grip and passed his hands over that shrunken face and matted beard; as he did so the face of his dream recurred to him, and he choked again.

“Oh, boy! What brought you into this hell?” cried the older man brokenly.

“Fate, Bob, I guess it was. Anyhow, I'm here. Did you give Parrish the information he wanted?”

“I—I had to, boy. I've fought 'em off day and

night, let 'em do what they could, and I wouldn't help the dirty gang an inch; but I couldn't see you run into the same hell, boy! They had me, and they knew it, and they got what they were after. God! Once I stood up to the lot of them—in Mecca it was—and cursed 'em to their face while they whipped me——”

“I'm sorry you told, Bob, after the long fight you put up; but I know how you felt. I'd do the same thing for you, I guess—and I may have to yet. We didn't think so much of our religion back home, did we? Remember the time we put the skunk under the old church flooring, and——”

“Yes, and I remember the strapping dad gave you for it—oh, boy, don't talk about it! How did they get their hands on you?”

Sitting there in the darkness with his brother's hand in his, Tredgar told of all that had happened since he had first seen that well-remembered seal ring with the odd scratch inside. Bob did not interrupt, but waited until he had brought the story down to date; then spoke slowly:

“John Solomon? It was long ago, ages ago; but I think I remember him as a fat little man who smoked a clay pipe. My dear boy, don't imagine that any help could ever come from him. It's sheer nonsense! Why, I've been in the hands of the Senussiyeh for—how long did you say? Nearly five years—is that all?”

“Well, I know their power, Allan; and I tell you that there's a bomb going to break some day!

Now you speak of it, I've caught little hints that show there is really a split in the Moslem peoples; but don't put any faith in what that Ala'adin told you.

"I say that the Senussiye^h cannot be destroyed; and Parrish is making such a place here that in another few years the Red Sea will be Moslem and the crescent will wave over the canal itself! Did you ever see their flag? I have. It's got the picture of the Moslem world on it—and you'd be surprised to see what that Moslem world was composed of!"

Then Number Fifteen told his story, and a terrible story it was. Bob Tredgar had learned the secret of the Abyssinian treasure from the janitor of his New York store, an old Englishman who claimed to have been one of the party; and there the tale jibed with the version given Allan by Parrish himself. The old janitor had so impressed Bob, that the latter finally consented to take a vacation, and incidentally to look up the treasure in question.

John Solomon, to whom he had applied for a small boat, had warned him in general terms against landing on the Arabian coast; but the American had gone on to Suez, made a short trip down the gulf, caught the fever, and returned to Suez to recuperate.

There his fever had returned, and in some way an agent of the Senussiye^h learned of his objective. When he grew better Bob had found himself aboard a dhow going down the coast, a prisoner. Then his wanderings began.

He had been taken to Mecca, then down to Hodeida and Mocha, and so across to the Italian colony of Eritrea. After two years of this, during which he was "examined" over and over, he was brought to El Woda'a, then in the first stages of construction, and put to work in various capacities.

Parrish had first appeared two years since, though he only spent a part of his time here; and with his coming the American had suffered as he had never dreamed a man could suffer. The renegade had taken a fiendish delight in torturing him, both mentally and physically; on one occasion he had taken him to Port Said, hidden in that same niche from which Allan Tredgar had seen the *Spindrif* taken, and the captive had been for two days within sight and hearing of his own people.

But through it all, his iron will had not given way. No sooner had he realized the existence of the Senussiyeh and its object than he had resolved never to give up the secret; as Parrish had said, the possession of those supposed relics of King Solomon would give the Order a tremendous moral power through all the Eastern world, where the tale-spinners yet love to relate interminable stories of the great Suleiman, the ruler of the genii.

Bob Tredgar, knowing this, had at first held his silence purely from higher motives; but as time passed, it had come to be a grim battle of wills, an unreasoning blind struggle between flesh and spirit.

More than once he had been given up for dead, and once he had even tried to kill himself; but for

all his shattered body, his will-power had risen above the torture until he had seen his brother in the toils.

Allan Tredgar dimly realized what it meant to the other to give up the secret, but when he blurted out his thought Bob gripped his hand hard.

“No, boy—I am glad of it, if I have saved you the hell I’ve been through. I’d have died before telling those devils what they wanted to know; but, now it’s all over, I’m really glad. No danger of their letting us go free, of course, but while there’s life there’s hope, Allan boy! And don’t worry about this Miss Grey; Parrish won’t dare to lay a finger on her until the grand master gives him the right, which will take time.

“Yes, it’s mighty good to have it all done with, after all! I’ve given in, and there’s no more torture—nothing but slavery ahead, and plain slavery looks mighty sweet after coming through the agonies of the damned!”

They sat and talked late that night, but Allan Tredgar had no heart to tell his brother of the renegade’s parting words to him.

CHAPTER XVI

BENEATH THE LASH

For that one night the brothers were together, as Parrish had promised. Allan Tredgar fell asleep long after midnight, and when he awoke he found his brother gone. He did not know that sickness had come upon Number Fifteen—the sickness of failure, of a torn mind in a broken body.

Those two blows from Sloop's whip had rendered Tredgar helpless. He was visited by the Arabs; and later he woke to find Captain Cairn being roughly flung into the cell. The skipper was bruised and battered from head to foot, but still defiant.

“It's a wonder they haven't killed you,” smiled Tredgar faintly, when they had exchanged stories.

“Not they, sir. Parrish wants me to join him—the swine! I say, Mr. Tredgar, that's bloody fine news about your brother! By scrag, I thought the whole bally trip was a wild-goose chase—'pon my word I did, sir!”

Cairn had just returned from his second attempted working, and related with no little satisfaction how on this occasion he had assumed docility until he had managed to slip a section of rock into the

entrails of a steam winch. This had precipitated trouble, and before returning to his cell he had managed to stretch out one of the engineers, which cheered him amazingly.

How long he lay in that cell while his wales were healing Tredgar never knew. Day and night were alike, save for visits of the guards with food and water; he had no word from his vanished brother and heard no more of Parrish's threats at torture.

Cairn affirmed that the work outside was being pushed with all speed, and as soon as Tredgar was able to walk he gained ample evidence of that fact.

After an examination by his jailors, he and Cairn were chained together and led out. Tredgar managed to persuade the fiery little seaman that the best policy was obedience—at least for the present—and both men were too thankful to find themselves in the open air again to make any trouble, though it was plain that Cairn only assented for the sake of his companion.

Then it was that Tredgar gained some inkling of what his brother had suffered during those five years of horror.

No chances were taken with Cairn this time. He and Tredgar were chained neck and waist, and were guarded with especial care. They were assigned to the dredge, which was engaged in cleaning out the harbour, the greater part of which was too shoal to be of any value, and the keen eye of Captain Cairn took in many things.

He showed Tredgar how much of the harbour had been blasted out bodily, how there must have been months and years of work before so much as a house was built, and how, without slave labour, nothing could have been done.

This work lasted a week, the two returning each night to their cell, while the other captives slept on the bare sand outside. Then, as if being gradually broken in, they were given over to an Arab, joined to a party of spirit-shattered Maltese and Italians, and set to work pushing the trams of rubble or rock. Now began the most terrible labour that Tredgar had ever known. They were pushed to the utmost limit, whips ever flickering around them—though the overseers took pains not to lash the skipper, having learned their lesson.

At times, they were in the blazing hot quarry; at times, on the ridge of cliff which hid the harbour from the sea outside; at times, they worked on a new building which was going up.

At noon and night they sank down exhausted by the stabbing heat, and slept like dead; indeed, Tredgar hourly expected death from the hot sun, but clean living told; and, instead of becoming emaciated, he seemed to harden and fill out.

“It’s good for ye, by scrag!” grunted Captain Cairn, one night. “Bitter hard, but good for the body.” And he spoke of long experience.

During those days of labour and unrelenting toil Tredgar learned from his unfortunate companions how they had come into this slavery. Most of the

Italians had been kidnapped from the Eritrea settlements; but Parrish had apparently brought many of the Greeks and French from the Mediterranean in his dhow, though how he got them past Port Said was more than Tredgar knew, unless he had utilized the secret passage. More than once the two saw other of the *Spindrift's* men, but never for any exchange of words.

Parrish, they saw seldom, for the renegade left most of the actual supervision to his aids. Once or twice Tredgar caught a flutter of white skirts from the awning outside the palace, and groaned in his bitterness of spirit; to be manacled and helpless was a new thing to him, and it bit deep.

He kept no track of days, but, from his growth of unshaven beard, guessed that he had been slaving for some three weeks, when Cairn rebelled for the third and last time.

Their hands were free, of course, that they might work the better, and one of the brown-burnoused brothers of the Order, whip in hand, was directing the unloading of a small dhow that had come in the day before. Just before they knocked off at noon, Cairn nudged Tredgar and pointed to a pile of small boxes marked "Flour".

"Notice how careful that was unshipped, sir? Dynamite, no less; I've run it many a time myself——"

"Work, pigs!"

Emboldened by the skipper's long docility, the *khou* brought down his whip over the naked

backs of the two. The man was but three feet away, and with a little snarl Captain Cairn leaped, dragging Tredgar with him; the Arab went down at the first blow, his whip falling close to Tredgar.

Reckless, the American caught at it and laid it over the Arab as he rose, Cairn gripping him, while Tredgar lashed unmercifully and with all his strength.

Meanwhile, the other captives watched apathetically, only one or two of the *Spindrifft* men daring to give shouts of delight and encouragement; but guards were running from all directions, and Cairn suddenly stopped Tredgar.

Pulling the howling Arab close to him, he made a quick search and uttered a yell of joy as he pulled out a revolver.

“Quick! Over there!”

While the running Arabs were still a dozen yards away, he had pulled Tredgar to the pile of boxes marked “Flour” and raised the revolver.

“Now, blast ye, take another step, ye swine, and I fire!”

A cry broke from the American, but it was lost in one shrill yell of dismay from Arabs and slaves alike. Knowing the little skipper as they did, none doubted that he would carry out his threat; as the alarm spread, the two found themselves in the centre of a deserted area, even the crew of the dhow alongside the quay plunging overboard without an instant's hesitation.

Shrill whistles rang out, the frightened slaves were driven off under guard, and the two standing beside the pile of dynamite uttered their first laugh in many days.

“By scrag!” chuckled the skipper. “Look at ’em up under the awning, yonder! I take it that our friend Parrish is somewhat peevish!”

“Looks that way,” grinned Tredgar uneasily. “But great Scott, man! You wouldn’t have fired, would you?”

“That I would, and may yet,” came the grim answer. “But not without sending some of these niggers to pot first. Hello, here comes a flag of truce! We’ve scared the bloody hearts out of ’em, by scrag!”

Indeed, the commotion beneath the awning on the hill above had shot forth a fezzed, English-speaking officer, who strode down toward them. As he came nearer Tredgar saw that his brown features were ghastly pale; but he doubtless feared Parrish more than death itself, for he came steadily on and stopped a dozen feet away.

“The Mokaddem orders you to surrender. There are a hundred rifles trained on you——”

“To blazes with you and your Mokaddem!” retorted Cairn joyfully. “Come to terms, haven’t you?” The skipper seated himself on one of the boxes, his heel tapping against the wood, and the aid went paler still.

“Now, you run back and tell Mr. Parrish that

Mr. Tredgar presents his compliments, and wants a bath and a shave. Also, the keys to these blasted chains."

The officer spread his hands helplessly, then fumbled beneath his *burnous*.

"I have full power to deal with you. Here are the keys——"

"Stand back there, you dog! Sling 'em over—that's the ticket. Now, Mr. Tredgar, I'll thank you to unlock us."

Tredgar obeyed, after which Cairn sent him off with the aid for a shave and a bath, promising to wait till he returned. The aid led his guest into the palace and gave him in charge of Ahmed; and half an hour later Tredgar, feeling like a new man, returned to find Captain Cairn smoking a cigarette, while a shaking Nubian rolled more, beside him.

"All done, sir? Then just take this bally gun while I run up yonder."

The American knew well that if the pinch came he would never fire, but Cairn marched off with calm confidence, and Tredgar enjoyed his first smoke in many days.

Determining to test his power, he sent for two white *burnouses*, which were promptly brought, together with coffee; it was very plain that Parrish was in no mind to have his waterfront and dhows sent up in splinters.

When Cairn marched jauntily from the palace

he paused to address Parrish, then swung down to the quay, humming "Mandalay". Upon his arrival, however, he developed unexpected common sense, which was a vast relief to Tredgar.

"I told Parrish what I thought of him, by scrag! Now, Mr. Tredgar, we can't carry this thing too far. Get out of here while we talk, you swine!"

The trembling negro lost no time in obeying, and after a short conference the two decided that as they were certain to lose out ultimately, the best thing they could do would be to effect a retreat with honours.

Cairn cast a wistful eye toward the boats in the harbour, but once away from the dynamite they would be shot down instantly, and he reluctantly consented to surrender.

A shout brought the aid down once more, and Cairn presented him the revolver and a hint to the effect that they would serve as slaves no more. When it was seen that the danger was over and the Arabs had surrounded them, Parrish himself came down to the quay, inscrutable as ever, a small paper rolled in his hand.

"Much obliged for the clean-up," grinned Tredgar cheerfully. "We needed it badly."

"Don't mention it, my friend. I was about to array you in the robes of the wedding-guest within a day or two, at most."

A chill struck to the American's heart as the other unrolled the paper and showed a few lines of Arabic

at sight of which the aids around saluted respectfully.

“As you cannot read Arabic, I might say that this is a special dispensation from our Father Senussi, releasing me from my monastic vows. Very interesting, eh? I trust you appreciate the point. You and Cairn have had a very pleasant little escapade, and if I did not have use for you, I assure you both that such dangerous firebrands would be soon stamped out.”

“You needn’t give me any more of your bloody offers, you scum!” broke out the skipper wrathfully. “I’ll never join hands with you, and you can lay to that.”

“I have quite given up the hope, my good man. But you see, there is the little matter of John Solomon to be explained—later. First, Mr. Tredgar, we must gain the lady’s consent to a marriage contract, you and I. A *cadi*, one of Mecca’s holiest men, has been sent for to perform the ceremony. I regret that it is inadvisable to send for the Rev. Peter Grey—it would prove of some little interest to him, I imagine.”

“Mary Grey will never mate with a half-baked nigger like you,” retorted Tredgar contemptuously. “She knows your history, why you were kicked out of the Army, and all the rest of it. If you want a wife, go and pick up some Arab from the slave market; she would be about an equal for a man of your general proclivities.”

The biting words stung Parrish to the quick,

and his sombre eyes lit up with a flame of rage which was as quickly extinguished. For a moment he fixed Tredgar with his cold hard eyes, and the American flung all his hatred into his own look.

“You’ll regret those words, Mr. Tredgar, before I have done with you. Frankly, I don’t think that I’ll kill you; as I told you once before, I do not believe in brutality such as appeals to you.

“I am sorry that your brother is too ill to be about, but it’s just as well; I don’t want to cripple you until after this wedding affair has come off satisfactorily. But I think that you’ll make a very good prisoner, until the Order has accomplished its purposes here, after which I’ll send you home again—with what’s left of your lady. You’d make very good mates for each other by that time.”

Tredgar, resolutely determined not to let the renegade goad him beyond his self-control, calmly gave look for look and answered nothing. So his brother was ill! Then for the present nothing would be done about Solomon’s ring.

“Have you got that treasure yet?” asked Cairn suddenly, Tredgar having told him the story. Parrish smiled.

“No, for Number Fifteen will have to guide us there himself, to which he has consented. Within a few days the matter will be closed. If the *cadi* arrives to-day, as he should, I’ll send him to see you; since the ceremony is to be an

Arabic one, we'll let you represent the bride—you know, the lady herself is only present by proxy. That might not satisfy her reverend father, but it's quite immaterial to me. So, for the present, Mr. Tredgar, you may return to your humble abode."

Tredgar allowed himself to be led away in silence, the irons not being replaced on either of the two men. If Parrish kept his word about getting Mary Grey's consent, thought the American, there was still hope ahead; for he knew the girl well enough to guess that the consent would not be forthcoming. Captain Cairn, who was too shrewd not to know how the land lay, pricked his bubble of hope when they were alone in the darkness.

"That devil plays his cards well, Mr. Tredgar. In the matter of Miss Grey, now, he's fiend enough to offer to torture ye before her eyes unless she consents. And as she has an uncommon liking for ye, sir, I'm afraid——"

Tredgar groaned.

"I'm afraid you're right, Captain. As to her liking me, that's another matter; but the girl couldn't watch the doing of things such as we've seen outside, without giving in. Even my brother couldn't, after standing them off for five years. Poor Bob! I wonder if he's really sick or if that's some lie of Parrish's?"

"He's knocked out right enough, I take it, or they'd have the treasure. If they had it, every

man jack would go wild over the fact. I'd like to know why he's so anxious about John Solomon, though."

Tredgar went over what Ala'adin had told him: and, somewhat to his surprise, Cairn corroborated the assertion that the Padishah was allied with the ship-chandler.

"John has been in stranger deals than that in his time. The Porte knows him pretty well, knows what a secret-service organization he's got, and knows that he has had some kind of power over the average Moslem for the past year or so—though what it is I'm blessed if I know! No, by scrag! John's the very man to handle such a thing for the old Sultan. If we live long enough, sir, we'll see a jolly rare scrap come off and, unless I'm much mistaken, Parrish will get all that's due him, with interest."

The exultation of their recent victory faded in Tredgar's mind before his fears of what lay hid in the future, and those fears were not for himself, but for Mary Grey, the sea-foam girl, whom he had picked from the waves and dragged into this horrible danger by the sheer thrust of chance.

"By the Lord," he thought savagely to himself, "if I ever get another chance at Parrish with a knife, I'll take it! If he really intends to have me at the so-called wedding, it'll be funny if I can't line up something."

He found out from the skipper that this was no doubt Parrish's intention. At an Arab wedding,

the bride is usually represented by a relative or friend, and for Tredgar to be given this position would be quite in keeping with the ironic nature of the man.

“Never fear, sir,” Cairn reassured him late that night; “he wouldn’t dare lay a hand on her without her consent, for he swore to it on the Koran and the Prophet, and all his men heard it. They’re mean scoundrels but good Moslems, and if he broke that oath he’d regret it, by scrag! No, she’s safe enough; you can lay to that, sir. I take it that he’s sent to Mecca for a *cadi*, as he says, and he’ll have a bally blow-out to celebrate the event. I wish some thief would put a bullet into that beggar of a *cadi* on the way!”

Tredgar devoutly seconded the wish. No *cadi* appeared that night, however, and when their keeper arrived in the morning Captain Cairn questioned him in Arabic without any result. Both prisoners had retained their white robes, and even these sorry spoils of war hugely delighted the skipper.

“Well sir,” he chuckled as he lighted the last of their cigarettes, “that bit of a time yesterday did me good! How that bloody nigger howled when you laid the whip on him! They’ve learned not to monkey with Hugh Cairn, by scrag! and if Parrish really sends that *cadi* to make arrangements with you, as he said, it might be a very good notion to take the beggar by the throat and do for him.”

There appeared to be possibilities in this benevolent idea; but, after mature deliberation, it was abandoned as being too impractical. At best, it would only serve to anger Parrish, and there were any number of Sayyids at El Woda'a; for any man of holiness could perform the ceremony.

The day wore slowly away until the jailer fetched in their evening meal. With it he brought a lantern, which he set on the floor of the cell, and a small prayer-rug. When he had carefully laid this over the straw litter, the Arab straightened up and spoke in English:

“The servant of the Prophet comes.”

Tredgar sprang up as a short brown-robed figure appeared in the doorway. The *cadi* wore his hood up, and only a stubbly grey beard showed beneath. As the jailer bowed reverently the *cadi* inserted a very short and very rank clay pipe between his teeth and trailed a match across his *burnous*.

“If the Prophet 'ad been a smokin' man, I says, 'e'd 'ave been more 'umanlike. Cigars is werry good in a pinch, says I; but give me a bit o' plug an' a clay an' I'll ask no more. Evenin', cap'n. Evenin', Mr. Tredgar.”

CHAPTER XVII

HIS REVERENCE THE CADI

“By scrag—if it isn’t John Solomon himself!”

The exclamation burst from Cairn who gripped the pudgy hand holding the match, which was promptly extinguished. Tredgar stared in incredulous amazement, first at the make-believe cadi and then at the impassively watching jailer.

“Easy there! Dang it, cap’n, ye’ve been an’ put out me light! And ’ow’s your good ’ealth, Mr. Tredgar?”

The American silently held out a hand, which John Solomon very promptly gripped. There was no mistaking that voice and those wide blue eyes which gazed out from beneath the flung-back hood; but the wonder of the thing laid hold on Tredgar, and he still could not believe it possible.

“Is it really you?” he asked slowly. “But how did you get in here? You aren’t a prisoner—it can’t be that you’re a friend of Parrish?”

The suspicion leaped into his brain at a flicker of amusement which crossed the face of the Arab by the door. Solomon turned and spoke in Arabic, and the Arab vanished. When the door was shut

the fat little man—less fat than when Tredgar had last seen him at Port Said—settled down on the prayer-rug with a sigh of relief.

“That’s ’im. Lud, what a man for to ask questions! Yes, Mr. Tredgar, sir, I might say as ’ow I’m a werry proper friend o’ Colonel Parrish; ’e sent for me to marry ’im, in a manner o’ speak-in’!”

He chuckled good-humouredly. “Ho, that was a good un, that was. ’E rides in, ’im and ’is men, cursin’ the Pasha from Dover to Halifax. ‘I’d ’ave ye know,’ says ’e, ‘as ’ow I’m the Cadi Abdullah Nur-ed-din, Pearl o’ the Faith! What’s more, I’m a Brother o’ the Senussiyeh, an’ Senussi Ahmed el Sherif is me Father——’

“‘Old ’ard,’ I says, ’elpin’ of ’im down from ’is camel, ‘I’d ’ave ye know, cadi, as ’ow I’m John Solomon, an’ me father was John Solomon before me. Read this firman o’ the Padishah, ye lousy priest!’ When ’e ’ad done readin’ ’e was that limp the Pasha ’ad to make ’im stand up to the firin’-squad with a rifle-butt. That was a rare un, that was!”

“I beg your pardon,” grinned Tredgar, beginning to understand. “So you’re only impersonating the cadi, eh? That must be a pretty risky game, even for John Solomon!”

“Oh, so-so! But I give Parrish the password of ’is blooming Order, me ’and on a gun. Forchnit it was ’e’d never seen me, but we spattered Arabic fine, me correctin’ ’is accent now ’an then by way

o' showing 'im me authority, so to speak. If I do say it as shouldn't, it ain't every man can talk the langwidge all shipshape an' proper; but if a chap 'as 'is 'ome in a strange land, I says, 'e can't waste 'is time a learning of the langwidge wrong. It pays to work right, says I, even if it's Arabic you're a workin' on."

Hopeless as he had been a few moments before, Tredgar was now just the opposite. The fact that John Solomon was here, even though he was here alone, sent his spirits up with a bound; there was something infectious in the very manner of the little man. A moment later the jailer entered again with two brown mantles of the Order, which he placed on the floor, then withdrew silently. Solomon chuckled again, puffing away at his clay pipe, at the amazement of Cairn and Tredgar.

"Explained the situation to me, Parrish did, werry exact, an' says for me to see Tredgar effendi an' persuade 'im to come peaceable to the council. This 'ere jailer being one o' my men was a bit of all right, too. Now, cap'n, I'm leavin' o' the pris'ners an' captives to you, as the Good Book says. 'Ere's a robe, an' 'ere's a gun," with which he held out an automatic to the skipper, who promptly pocketed it, "and out yonder's the slaves.

"But go slow, cap'n, go slow; 'urry is a werry good thing in its place, I says; but this ain't its place. Free them slaves, but keep 'em quiet,

or you an' me an' Mr. Tredgar we'll all find paradise a bit too sudden. Paradise is werry nice, no doubt; but I says as 'ow earth 'as its good points likewise."

"No, by scrag," objected the skipper, with determination, settling back in the straw. "Since there's no hurry, John, give us the yarn. What's on deck?"

A sudden thought occurred to Tredgar, as he remembered a certain compact he had made weeks before. Before Solomon spoke he told of Ala'adin ibn Hassan, and delivered the last message of the man to his master. Solomon's fingers trembled slightly on his pipe-stem and the blue eyes opened very wide indeed, which was the only sign of agitation the pudgy ship-chandler permitted himself to display.

"Thank'ee, Mr. Tredgar. I 'eard as 'ow Ala'adin was dead, but I'm main glad to get 'is message straightforwardlike. Now just a minute, after which I'll oblige ye, cap'n."

So saying, Solomon reached within his flowing robe and pulled out various articles. When a plug of tobacco, a spare pipe—upon which Tredgar seized—a match-box, and a parchment roll had been laid out, he extracted a very greasy little red note-book, and a fountain pen, with which he bent nearer the lantern for a moment.

"You don't mind the date o' that, now, Mr Tredgar?" he inquired, peering up. "It's main 'ard to write without me glasses; but I'd like to

put down the date all nice an' proper. Business is business, says I, even in Bab el Woda'a."

"No, the date's beyond me," laughed Tredgar, lighting the pipe he had taken up.

Solomon shook his head, wrote down a word or two, then bestowed his possessions very carefully, with a mournful glance at Tredgar's pipe. When he was once more comfortably ensconced on his rug, he refilled his own pipe, sighed, and poured a most amazing tale into the ears of his two hearers.

Ala'adin had told Tredgar the truth. Not only were the designs of the Order and its activities at El Woda'a looked upon with something very akin to terror at Constantinople, but the Padishah had determined to crush out this power that threatened his own prestige.

Africa would be left the Senussiyeh, but Arabia and the rest of Turkey were to be swept clean of the brotherhood. He had sent them an ultimatum to this effect long before, the Senussi had discredited the operations at El Woda'a, and peace had been patched up.

"So when the Porte learned that El Woda'a was fast being completed under Parrish, a firman was sent Solomon, endowing him with every power, and ordering death to every member of the Order found on Turkish soil. Just why this had been sent the ship-chandler, instead of being given to a Pasha, Tredgar did not see, nor did Solomon explain at the time. At any rate, the parchment roll beneath his *burnous* was the firman itself.

Solomon had already learned of the disappearance of the *Spindrift*, through the activities of Lieutenant Krogness. As there were already a score of his spies inside El Woda'a, Solomon had obtained the help of Krogness and a detachment of marines, who were now hidden across the hills; in touch with them was a regiment of spahis and another of bashi-bazouks, or irregulars, as well as a camel corps, which had been despatched by Solomon's orders from Tebuk with the utmost secrecy.

All were picked men, and when the *cadi* Abdullah, accompanied by three more of the *Senussiyeh*, had stumbled into their camp outside El Woda'a the previous evening, all four brethren had been at once executed by the Pasha in command of the troops.

Having learned their errand, John Solomon had come in place of the *cadi*, for an open attack on El Woda'a was out of the question until some dissension could be stirred up within the gates.

"But waitin' is werry bad business, I says," concluded the little fat man, somewhat out of breath. "There's the troops, and 'ere's us; There's Parrish, and 'ere's 'is slaves. What more could a man ask? We 'ave parties o' men ready to take them guns on the 'ills in a jiffy; Lieutenant Krogness 'as landed a searchlight, which was to be put up on the 'ill back yonder at dark an'opened up at the first shot. What's the use o' waitin', I says? None whatever, says

I. Now, cap'n, I'd be on me way, if I was you."

"I wish you'd been me for the last week," sighed the skipper as he rose. "It's been a rosy mess here, and no mistake, John. Good luck, Mr. Tredgar."

"Same to you, captain."

"Lud! This camel's-hair will smell vile o' tobacco," reflected Solomon, as the door shut behind the skipper who had been met by the Arab jailer. "Now, Mr. Tredgar, what's best to be done, if you please?"

The American found that the supposed *cadi* had been sent to persuade him to give his word to attend the council in peace, on which condition he was not to be bound, and to arrange the wedding ceremony—a subtle touch of mockery from Parrish. The council of the *Senussiyeh* was to obtain the consent of Mary Grey to the wedding—how, Solomon did not know.

The troops and the marines under Krogness had arrived the day before, and as outside of the work on the city there was nothing going forward, they had been in little danger of discovery; but Solomon and the Pasha in command had agreed that if the slaves could be freed by the former the attack would take place on the first sign of disorder within *El Woda'a* itself.

As the council was to meet at midnight, Tredgar found there was plenty of time, it not being more than nine now. As they talked the matter over

it suddenly occurred to the American that Mary Grey should have some warning of what was forward, and he said so. Solomon eyed him thoughtfully for a moment.

“It’s werry plain,” he said at length, “that it’s the messenger rather than the message as you’re a thinking of, sir. Well, well, man is born o’ woman, I says, which makes it natural-like for ’im to ’anker after ’er ’all ’is days, says I. Let’s see—I fetched along two o’ my own men, each one a Sayyid o’ great sanctity; it might be as ’ow they’d be let see the missus, Anyhow, we’ll ’ave a try. Mejid!”

At his call the Arab jailer appeared, took a message, and vanished. “I says as ’ow you would come peaceable if so be the missus asked you. It’s a poor excuse; but when a chap ’as been took up for poaching, says I, any excuse is good. So I asks to ’ave my Sayyids take a message from you to ’er an’ back again. If ’e says ‘yes’, well an’ good; if ’e says ‘no’, then no ’arms done.”

The answer, however, proved to be an assent. The Mokaddem had issued orders that the Sayyids were to be admitted to the presence of Miss Grey, and to this the Sayyids themselves bore testimony by their appearance.

To Tredgar’s eyes they were no different from the men of the Brotherhood, with their green turbans and brown robes; but they saluted Solomon respectfully and awaited his commands.

When these had been delivered one of the men

stripped himself of his robe and gave it to Tredgar who was to accompany the other Sayyid. When it came to putting the green turban of sanctity and pilgrimage upon the head of a heretic and Frank, however, the Sayyid demurred; but at sight of the parchment roll his face cleared, and he wound the turban for Tredgar with his own hands.

“Up wi’ that ’ood, Mr. Tredgar! Them green eyes’d look main bad for an Arab; I ’aven’t dared show me blue ’uns since I got inside the place. Off with ye now—but no talkin’ save ye’re alone wi’ the missus, mind. For once, you’re a ’oly man, sir; if it wasn’t for the talking we do, says I, there’d be more saints than saintesses. ’Cause why? Us men talks, an’ wimmen talks; wimmen says nothin’ of any consekence, but men says things as shouldn’t be said, so wimmen is saints an’ men ain’t. So bear in mind you’re ’oly for once, Mr. Tredgar.”

Tredgar laughed and followed his Sayyid companion out into the darkness, a flood of confidence taking possession of him. The cheerful optimism of John Solomon coloured all things, and when they stood at the gateway built in the hill he looked over the dim-lit quay and huddled buildings and harbour, feeling that he was the master, not they.

At the side door of the palace, they met the Nubian Ahmed. He did not speak, but with a respectful salute guided them through corridors, which

Tredgar saw were lit with hidden electric bulbs, to a door at which stood another Nubian on guard. A few words and they were past.

The American found himself in a room fitted in the most luxurious of Eastern style, rugs covering walls and floor, except for one wall with the customary tiers of shelves, Arab fashion, holding every manner of cut glass and china, and another which was a solid front of mirror. And across the room, standing with a trace of alarm on her exquisitely chiselled features, was Mary Grey.

Tredgar glanced about; the Nubians had vanished and the door was closed, but there was no telling what eyes might be upon them. While the girl drew slightly away, the American came forward, his face still hidden, leaving his companion by the door.

“Don’t be frightened, Mary Grey,” he said softly, assuming a respectful attitude. But the light had fallen under his hood, and as amazement leaped into her face her hand went out; Tredgar caught it and pressed it to his lips, then stepped back.

“Careful! That may have lost us everything. Are you well?”

“Well; but terribly alarmed about you, Horizon!” she returned quickly, searching his half-hidden features. “Parrish told me such things——”

“Never mind, it’s just about over with him, sea-foam girl. Now listen: to-night, you are to

come to the council, where they will get your consent to marry him. I'll be there, but so will others, so don't let him scare you."

"He can't scare me now, Horizon. Let me see your face—don't worry, this is perfectly free from spies here, for Parrish has really treated me well indeed."

Tredgar hesitated a moment; then threw his hood partly back, smiling. He was startled at the look which swept into the girl's face, and abruptly she put out both hands to his shoulders.

"Oh, Horizon! You look so—so tired, and *old*! But, no, that's not it; you look as if—oh, I can't think what!"

"I haven't had a pleasant time, Mary Grey," he answered softly, holding her clear eyes with his own. "But I've found Bob, or the wreck of him, and things are going to clear up if nothing goes wrong to-night."

He fell silent, for he had read something in the eyes upraised to his that there was no mistaking—something that drove all caution from his heart and made him forget the silent brown figure behind. Without a word he put out his arms, her hands went up around his neck, and he knew that he had sighted the last horizon of all.

A touch on his arm roused him, and he looked to meet the stern eyes of the Arab. Mary Grey had seen him, too, and knew that the time was up; once more their lips met, and Tredgar replaced his

hood and turned to the Sayyid, his heart aflame with living joy.

“Good-bye for the present—dear!” he smiled, and a moment after they stood outside.

Tredgar remembered little of that return passage. The thing of which he had not even dared to dream had come to pass; forgotten was Solomon and Parrish and even Bob in the whirl of delirious rapture that filled his brain like old wine and threw out all other things save the one thing.

“Oh, Mary Grey,” he thought to himself, “if I don’t pull you out of this after what’s happened to-night, it’ll be a funny thing! For two cents I’d go in and shoot Parrish right now!”

Common sense and lack of a weapon came to his rescue before he attempted this madness, however, and he was soon at the mouth of the cave-prison once more. Here the jailer was on watch, rifle ready, and passed them at a word from the Sayyid.

They encountered another figure with a lantern in the passage, who also exchanged a password, and on reaching the cell found two more Arabs with Solomon, besides the second Sayyid.

Tredgar restored his green turban to the last, with the robe, and slipped into the brown *burnous* of the Order, which the jailer had brought him. Solomon dismissed the Arabs, bidding them rest outside until they were called. A moment later the drone of voices came from the passage in the *sura* of the Koran.

“In the name of the most merciful God! Praise be to Allah, lord of all things, the all-compassionate, king of the day of judgement! Thee do we worship and of thee we beg aid. Direct us aright in the way of thy graciousness, not in the way of those against whom Thou art angered or of those who go astray.”

“Pretty comprehensive firman, this,” and Solomon tapped his waist complacently. “I told ’em to put off praying till there was nothin’ else for to do, which same they did. Prayin’s a good thing—a werry good thing at times—but there’s times *and* times, I says. An’ now, Mr. Tredgar, if I may make so bold, what did the missus ’ave to say?”

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW THE NIGHT BEGAN

Tredgar told what Mary Grey had said, but omitted to mention the latter part of his interview. Solomon, however, was keen of eye and chuckled to himself.

“Werry good, Mr. Tredgar. Quite remarkable it is, in a way o’ speakin’, ’ow a chap can go out lookin’ pale an’ come back lookin’ like the fiery furnace, as the Good Book speaks of. Mind, I knows nothin’ and I says nothin’, just like that. Love is a fine mysterious affair, Mr. Tredgar; an’ quite proper it is as a man should find ’is mate. Only, says I, let ’im be sure as ’ow ’e ’as the right mate; the only drawback to the saccerment is its bindin’ quality at times, I says.”

“Quite correct, John Solomon; and if we ever get out of this place I think it’ll be fitting and proper that you give the bride away, since her father will likely do the main part of the work. How does that strike you?”

Solomon stared a moment, then put out one hand and mopped his brow with the other.

“Congratoolations, so to speak, sir!” he said solemnly. “A real pleasure it’ll be, I do assure you! But there’s ’ard times ahead, sir, and I’ll leave it to you to look after the missus when the rumpus starts. There’ll be ’ot work, says I, as’ll make it no place for a lady.”

“Trust me for that,” nodded Tredgar confidently.

“Don’t you suppose we could make a little scouting trip? There’s a pile of dynamite cases on the quay that have not gone to the depot yet, and there’s usually only one man on guard down there. If we could lay a train to that, it would make a grand little explosion, and it’s far enough from the quarry and the palace not to do much damage to Cairn or to us.”

“Where’s this depot?” asked Solomon quickly.

Tredgar explained its position—a small stone building under the cliffs on the far side of the harbour, where explosives, cartridges, and arms were stored. Solomon was determined not to go out himself, for his figure was too easily known, and the *cadi* was supposed to be elsewhere than on the quay at the time; but he thought the idea well worth trying.

As the attack was to be entirely dependent on events at the council meeting, it was useless to plan out the details ahead of time. The *Arethusa* marines and sailors, thirty of them, under Krogness, were posted on a high hill behind the palace; preparations had been under way to fortify this hill, but as no work had been started the guards were not extended so far.

Parties of the spahis were posted in readiness to rush each of the redoubts on the land side, and the Pasha himself had arranged to lead a company toward the rock-tongue after dark in order to take care of the heavy guns that had already been set in position.

At the first gun fired, Krogness was to play his searchlight down on the palace and buildings below, while the bashi-bazouks' regiment would rush the forces of the Senussiye.

"I'd like to have a try at putting a fuse to that dynamite myself," said Tredgar ruefully, "but I don't know a blamed thing about it," and he told of how he and Cairn had forced Parrish to terms the day before.

That the dynamite was still there he had no doubt, for the depot had been too full to receive it on the previous day. Solomon laughed heartily over the story, and before he had a chance to comment on it Captain Cairn himself appeared at the door behind.

"There's about five hundred crazy men down in the quarry, John," he reported with all his jaunty, truculent manner regained. "I've had to near kill half a dozen of 'em, by scrag, to make 'em realize the fact that they were to keep quiet, but I left my *Spindrifft* men to put the fear o' God into them, and they'll do it.

"Now see here; the beggars aren't armed except for the rifles of the dozen guards, which my men have, but once they break loose there'll be bloody

hell to pay. By scrag, two of 'em jumped one of the Arabs and bally near tore him into little bits! I don't blame them, but it won't do, John."

"No, cap'n, it won't do, as you say," John Solomon thought swiftly. "See 'ere, cap'n. You spread the word among 'em as 'ow they ain't to jump till a blast of dynamite goes off; tell 'em we're blowin' up the palace, or any bloomin' thing you want. That ought to keep 'em quiet."

He explained Tredgar's plan, and the skipper caught at it instantly. As there were fuses and dynamite caps kept in the quarry, it was decided that Cairn, Tredgar, and one of Solomon's Arabs were to attend to the watchman on the quay and set the fuse; the Arab would take the watchman's place, and at the first sign of trouble from the palace he was to fire the fuse and run. Tredgar interposed at this juncture with a smile.

"We're talking like a lot of kids, Solomon. It's all a waste of effort to bother with this fuse business. We'll go down and clear out that sentinel and leave your Arab; at the first hint of the fuss, he can get behind something and put a bullet into that pile of dynamite. If he doesn't, someone else is apt to by mistake, at a time when it might be distinctly embarrassing."

The others chuckled over their own lack of thought, and Solomon called in one of the Sayyids, to whom he carefully explained the plan in Arabic.

Satisfied that the descendant of the Prophet firmly understood his orders, Tredgar, Cairn, and the Arab issued forth into the night once more.

There was a glow of light from the palace, but the rest of the place was in darkness, as the grey tramp had left the harbour long since and the dhows carried no riding lights, while the stone buildings inhabited by the brotherhood were filled with sleeping men.

The starlight was brilliant, however, and as the three calmly walked down to the harbour they met more than one dark figure, to whom the Sayyid spoke greetings in Arabic.

The solitary watchman on the quay wound his way between piles of boxes and packing-cases, rifle on shoulder. As the three were dressed like himself, he paid them little attention until they strolled near, when he brought up his rifle with a sharp word.

The Sayyid responded quietly and the man lowered his rifle, leaning on it as for a chat. But he spoke no word, for the Sayyid went close to him, something flashed between them, and the Arab calmly handed the man's rifle to Tredgar as he carried the limp body behind a pile of cases.

The American felt no horror at the deed. In the past few weeks he had seen too much cruelty in this place, he had experienced too much of it himself, and the memory of his brother was too strong within him to allow him to feel pity.

He looked up at the black mass on the hill behind the palace, and wondered if Krogness was waiting to flash his light down on the little harbour that was so soon to become a place of destruction; but no light appeared now, and with a little sigh he turned to the work in hand.

He and Cairn had no trouble in picking out the pile of boxes marked "Flour", which lay where they had last seen them. When the Arab had made certain that there would be no mistake, he escorted them back to the prison and returned. Cairn obtained another of the men as escort to the quarry, and Tredgar rejoined Solomon in the cell.

Too late, it was evident that a mistake had been made in releasing the excitable Greeks and Latins in the quarry. They would be of little use, being unarmed, save to confuse the Senussiyeh members; while there was danger that at any instant they might break out, and a single yell would be sufficient to give the alarm.

Cairn had attended to the dozen sentinels at the quarry itself, but there were scores of others scattered about the uncompleted works and along the fortifications on the hillsides, where many of the brotherhood themselves were encamped.

"We're sittin' on a powder mine," said Solomon gravely. "Powder is all werry well in its place, I says, but it's place ain't under our feet."

He and Tredgar now made what plans they could for the council meeting, the American shifting back to his white *burnous* and stowing away

beneath it a revolver which the other handed to him.

It was finally decided that, when the time came for Solomon to reveal himself, Tredgar should cover Parrish and make sure of him if need were, while Solomon gave the signal to those outside.

“It’s a risky business, though,” reflected Tredgar, worried. “Miss Grey will no doubt be there, and if Parrish should have anything up his sleeve she might get hurt.”

Solomon explained that there would not be more than four or five men at the council, that armed guards would be dispensed with, save for the sentinels outside, and that with two revolvers they should be able to keep five men quiet.

Then, safe in the palace while the attack proceeded without, they could remain with their prisoners until rescuers entered. Moreover, a number of his spies would be ready to take care of the palace sentinels at the first alarm.

“All very well if it goes that way,” decided the American, filling his pipe from Solomon’s plug. “But you can’t tell how the cat’s going to jump, and Parrish is some cat, believe me! However, it listens pretty good, John; if we can hold that room and the council, we’ll sure have everything our own way.”

So in the end he concluded that Solomon’s plan promised well for all things; forgetting that Chance had not yet been eliminated from this

petty game of men, and that she perches ever on the ivory ball until it stops rolling and finds its pocket.

They were aroused from their discussion by the entrance of the jailer, who said something to Solomon in Arabic. The latter at once girded up his loins and rose.

“Time’s up, Mr. Tredgar. The council ’as sat an’ ’as sent for you an’ me, so we’d best be a moving. Remember, as I’m the ’oly man now, sir, an’ don’t be a pulling of that ’ere gun before the right an’ proper time.”

“All right, commodore!” returned Tredgar gaily. “All aboard for the showdown!”

Once more Solomon became the *cadi*, the jailer preceding them with the lantern and Tredgar following the solemn pudgy little figure of the holy man.

On reaching the built-in gateway they found a fezzed officer awaiting them, who touched breast, lips and brow before the *cadi*, and turned to lead them to the palace.

The American gazed over the harbour and buildings with a feverish hope that nothing would go wrong. There was no sign of aught unusual to be seen, however; at the palace door the guards presented arms and the officer led them through the corridors until they came to that same chamber where Tredgar had first seen his brother, and where Jerry Sloop had met his death.

Save for the ranked troops the scene was much the same. Seated on his rug and against the wall, was Parrish, brown, immobile, vigilant as ever; and at each side were two of the officers.

The aid who had brought them made his report and stood waiting; the supposed *cadi* received reverent greeting from all, and took his place on the renegade's right, and save for the group before him Tredgar saw that the chamber was empty.

This was encouraging; if he and Solomon had to hold the heads of the *Senussiyeh* here, two automatics could very easily control five men. Slowly Parrish began speaking, his searching gaze full upon the American.

"Since you have given your parole to the *cadi*, Tredgar, you'll remain unbound—and appreciate the courtesy. Since the *cadi* speaks English after a fashion, you've no doubt learned from him the object of this council. Am I right?"

"He was good enough to give me certain information," and Tredgar with difficulty repressed a smile as he glanced toward the hooded holy man. "I believe that you hope to obtain Miss Grey's consent to this genial farce of yours. Of course, you might as well save your breath; I told you once before where to get a wife, I believe."

"Yes, you dog!" snarled Parrish, vicious hatred flashing forth in his eyes for a fleeting instant. "And, as I told you, you'll regret it. That brother of yours is well able to stand a touch or two now; we'll have you in here to-morrow and

get to the bottom of this John Solomon matter. Whoever that beggar is, he'd better not monkey with Lionel Parrish. Now, either pass your word to keep your mouth shut after Miss Grey gets here, or I'll have it shut for you."

Out of the tail of his eye Tredgar caught a nodding gesture from the *cadi*.

"Very well, I'll not speak unless I'm spoken to," he smiled. Despite his efforts he could not entirely keep his triumphant feelings hidden, and Parrish gazed at him for a moment with deep suspicion rankling in his face. Finally, he turned to the aid and spoke in English.

"Bring Miss Grey."

The aid saluted and was gone. Parrish sat silent, his venomous brown eyes fixed steadily on the American, while the four officers whispered quietly among themselves.

It occurred to Tredgar that in the pocket of his ragged trousers reposed Solomon's spare pipe, still only half-smoked, with a match or two; slipping his hand in through the wide arm-hole of his *burnous* he found the pipe, and calmly brought it out, struck a match on his sleeve, and coolly lit it.

The countenances of his captors afforded him malicious satisfaction, and as Parrish glared, astounded, he chuckled quietly, sending a ring of smoke at the *Mokaddem*.

"Good tobacco, Parrish. Better try a chew, if you don't smoke, old man."

Parrish choked with anger and an outraged cry broke from the others. Tredgar felt absolutely reckless now, and was prepared for anything, but Parrish calmed the rest with a few words and resumed his stare at the American, whose manner plainly puzzled him.

Tredgar grinned amiably, with one hand on his revolver and the other holding his pipe, and slouched in assumed contentment as he inspected the men before him.

It was a matter of entire indifference to him what took place now, and with the memory of what he had suffered like a flame in his heart, he gave the renegade look for look and itched to put a bullet into that evil restless brain.

So, while the Arabs eyed him and talked low-voiced among themselves, there came steps and the flutter of garments from behind, and Tredgar turned to see Mary Grey, with the Nubian Ahmed behind her, enter the room.

Parrish rose and bowed, as did the rest, but she came straight to Tredgar, her hand outstretched, and disregarded the Moslems.

“Good evening, Allan,” she said simply, and Tredgar realized that it was the first time she had used his name. Taking her hand he dropped his pipe to the stone floor and laughed as it shattered.

“So breaks the power of the Senussiye, Mary Grey!”

"Be silent!" hissed Parrish venomously, and Tredgar, recollecting his promise, dropped the girl's hand and stood away from her. The renegade was furious, and blood fell on his two-pronged beard from a bitten lip as he dismissed Ahmed.

"Miss Grey," he went on bluntly, controlling himself with an effort, "it is my wish that you marry me immediately. All arrangements have been made for the ceremony, and your consent will remove the only obstacle."

"And if I do not consent?" came the quiet question.

"Then *Allan* will be lashed to that ring on the wall opposite and flogged, until you do."

Silence. Brown eyes met brown eyes, but if Parrish had expected to find disquiet in the girl's manner he was disappointed.

Every eye was bent upon her, and in the cruel gaze of the renegade there was a strange intensity, an outpouring of will that Tredgar had seen there once before.

Anxiously he glanced at the girl, but she stood firm and proud, unshrinking before that hypnotic gaze; for the second time Parrish had met a will that was stronger than his own, and slowly his white teeth flashed in a snarl as he became aware of the fact.

Suddenly, Tredgar caught a little movement from the *cadi*, who stood behind the officers

and Parrish. There was a crackling sound, and out on the floor, bounding to the very feet of the renegade, fell a small parchment roll.

John Solomon had delivered his ultimatum.

CHAPTER XIX

PARRISH PLAYS TRUMP

“Where did that come from?”

Parrish whirled and searched the men behind him with flaming eyes. But the aids had been too absorbed in Mary Grey to notice the *cadi*, who stood motionless, and the surprise of all was evident. The renegade looked at the roll for a moment, then kicked it impatiently to one of the officers.

“Read—and in English.”

The aid stooped and picked up the roll, wondering. As he opened it Tredgar saw his brown face go ashen, and he took a step backward; then, instead of reading it, he put it to his forehead and held it out.

“The commander of the faithful——”

With an oath, Parrish snatched the roll of parchment, scanned it over, and his features contracted in a snarl of fury as he crushed it together in his hand.

“Who brought that here? By the Prophet, speak! Who threw that out? Speak, you dogs, or I’ll have you flayed alive!”

The pudgy little figure of the *cadi* stepped quietly forward, and one hand held out a little red note-book. With a swift gesture he flung back the *burnous*-hood, and his wide blue eyes gazed on Parrish with an air of slight surprise. Tredgar, his revolver hidden in his flowing sleeve, waited.

“Beggin’ your pardon, Colonel Parrish, but if you’ll have the kindness for to glance over this ’ere account—John Solomon it is, in account wi’ the Senussiyeh—I’ll be obliged to ye. As to the firman, why, I fetched ’er along just to clear the way, so to speak; firmans is all werry well in their place, says I, an’ this ’ere’s the proper place for that firman. You’ll find the account brought up to date, colonel, though I don’t say as ’ow the date of Ala’adin ibn Hassan’s death is correct, which same I trust as you’ll straighten out.”

Parrish, astounded, seemed paralysed, as he met those wide-open blue eyes. He mechanically extended a hand for the note-book, but a startled exclamation from one of the aids woke him from his stupefaction.

As the officer started forward, Tredgar whipped out his revolver and swung it up; the amazed officers shrank back, and as fresh anger shot into the renegade’s face Solomon calmly produced an automatic and held it within a foot of Parrish’s body.

“No tricks now, colonel!” and there was a pleading note in the Chandler’s voice. “No

tricks, *if* you please; I'd be werry sorry indeed to make a mess o' you in the presence o' this sweet young lady 'ere."

"Line up against the wall, you," commanded Tredgar to the four aids. Utterly bewildered and helpless, they obeyed. Parrish, however, gained swift command of himself, and Tredgar could not but admire the man for his self-control, as the cold emotionless voice rang out:

"So you're John Solomon, eh? I see by this firman that the Padishah is pleased to grant death to the brethren of the Order; what do you think of that, Captain Fezi?"

One of the officers smiled, Tredgar watching him narrowly.

"Va-ree nice, excellency! Eet ees ze one joke, eh? S'all ze sentry be called?"

"Fine chance you have of calling any sentries!" interposed Tredgar grimly. "You chaps make a move and I'll drill you—get me?"

His hard-set face, and eyes that seemed to burn with cold flame, evidently helped them to "get him", for they nodded. He turned to the girl behind, without getting the aids out of his line of vision.

"Mary Grey, please go and stand over there by the door for the present. We can't tell what will happen here, and I want to be sure you're out of the way of harm."

The girl obeyed the command, in silence. Parrish

looked on with his thin-lipped smile, his inhuman, statue-like eyes flitting about from face to face. He contemptuously dropped the parchment and the red note-book to the floor, Solomon's gaze fixed on every movement of the slender brown figure.

"So you're the famous John Solomon, eh? Well, I can't say that I think much of your looks, my friend, for a fact; they don't correspond with your ability in forging that firman. I'd like to know, though, where that *cadi* of mine is; if you will tell me that I'll try and keep my men from crucifying you before you die."

"Your 'umble servant, sir," replied John Solomon, no hint of sarcasm in his tone. Plainly Parrish despised him and took the whole affair as a desperate play on Tredgar's part, so the American could see from his whole attitude. "Why, as for that, colonel, I met 'is 'oliness as I was a prowlin' around outside them 'ills, so I made bold for to borry 'is costume, so to speak. Clothes don't make the man, says I, but a man is known by 'is clothes in strange places, I says. Forchnit it was as I'd growed a beard, or your Fezi Bey over there would 'a known me first off."

Tredgar caught a worried look on the face of Captain Fezi and checked the man as he started to speak; evidently this aid knew more about John Solomon than did his master, and Tredgar was quite willing that Parrish should underestimate the other as long as he would do so.

A strong impulse was upon him to shoot the

renegade where he stood, and no compunction would have stayed his arm; but he knew that Solomon wished to take Parrish alive, if possible.

Remembering how he had cursed his own hesitancy before, he was half-tempted to shoot, and risk Solomon's anger; the renegade's lack of alarm was disquieting, and he was so thoroughly conversant with the shifty nature of the man that this parleying worried him.

Besides, every moment wasted in talk was a terrific nerve-strain; he knew that Cairn could not restrain the maddened slaves for long, and the sooner the signal was given the better.

But John Solomon seemed entirely unconcerned with extraneous affairs. His automatic never wavered, and his wide blue eyes seemed to drink in Parrish's actions and words with mild curiosity.

"You thought it was a good chance to get inside—I see. Well, John Solomon, appearances are deceitful, quite so, as you'll find. Mr. Tredgar, this is another of your stage-plays, and while just at present you have obtained a very good effect, I don't see your object. Queer, that you didn't give Cairn a hand in this game! It would have suited the little devil to the back-bone to have held up the palace single-handed."

"Don't worry about Cairn," smiled Tredgar grimly. "He's quite able to hold up his own end, I fancy, and you'll hear from him before long."

For the first time, a flicker of alarm strayed into the brown face, and the cold eyes rested uneasily on Tredgar, who suddenly bethought himself that these five chiefs of the Order must be armed. He took a step backward.

“Parrish, step back to the wall there. Move lively, you hound—I’d sooner shoot you than talk to you, by a darn sight! You men, put your hands up and keep ’em up; now, John, I have this bunch covered pretty well, so if you’ll run down the line and relieve them of their hardware, I think we’d have a much pleasanter little talk.”

Solomon nodded gravely. Parrish had obeyed the order with what seemed very like eagerness, to Tredgar; but narrowly as he watched the man, he could do nothing to ground any suspicion on save those cold, supercilious brown eyes.

Mary Grey was watching at the door, and there was no danger of a surprise from that quarter; but Tredgar would have given a good deal to let off the signal shot that would start the game outside.

The mock *cadi* took a pair of automatics from each officer, together with clips of cartridges, but Parrish proved to be unarmed.

He stood against the wall, his slim hands held out against the stone at his back, the same mirthless smile curling his lips.

There was no fear in the man—nor indeed was there any heart in him, and the more Tredgar gazed

at him the more he felt an uncanny sense of danger, a premonition that Parrish was by no means so helpless as he appeared.

“Better let me put a bullet into him,” he muttered to Solomon, who was filling his pockets with magazine clips. “There’s no use delaying any longer.”

“It’s a mortal bad thing, sir, to be in a ’urry, ’sides settin’ them dago slavveys a werry bad example. Now, Mr. Tredgar, this ’ere Colonel Parrish we’ll dispense with for the present. Look at Fezi Bey ’ere. ’E’s served in the Dutch Army, ’e ’as eddication an’ the Senussiyeh back of ’im, but ’ere he stands. Fezi, you knows as ’ow that ’ere firman ain’t no forgery, don’t you?”

“Et ees ze firman of ze Padishah,” murmured the officer obediently, and there was wonder and fear in his face as he looked into the wide blue eyes.

“An’ you don’t propose to obey the commander o’ the faithful?”

“I am of ze Senussiyeh,” replied the other more firmly. Solomon nodded.

“Exactly. You are acquainted with the Pasha Reis Abdullah? ’E ain’t so werry partic’lar in ’is methods of gettin’ information, Fezi, and ’e’s a-waitin’ for me to call ’im inside ’ere. Ho, that fetches you, colonel?”

For Parrish had suddenly started into alarm. He was just beginning to realize that John Solomon was more dangerous than he seemed, and as the

brown hands curled out graspingly at the stone wall Tredgar kept him covered, hoping for a chance to fire.

But Parrish, for all the evil passions that flamed in his face, was no fool; he read determination in the grey-green eyes behind that automatic, and Tredgar laughed grimly.

“Too bad you haven’t Jerry Sloop waiting with his Maxim silencer, isn’t it? He could finish us off very neatly, Parrish; poor Bob did a good stroke of work there!”

The slim brown fingers wandered desperately over the stone, as Parrish leaned back and fought for time like some trapped animal.

“Tredgar, I’ll give you that girl freely if you’ll turn your gun on this fat devil! I’ll give you free passage to England, guarantee you indemnity, pay over a cool million dollars, and give you your girl for ten minutes of freedom!”

Tredgar smiled, playing with the man.

“How long would you keep your oath? It’s a tempting proposition, I’ll admit, colonel! If you made it two million, now——”

“Done! I swear it on the Koran, and I call the council to witness it!” And Parrish leaned forward eagerly, his eyes burning.

“You fool!” smiled Tredgar gently. “You fool!”

For a moment he thought the renegade would spring at his throat, but the brown fingers gripped

the wall until the knuckles stood out white, and the intensity of fury in the brown eyes was the only token of the seething passion behind.

Tredgar smiled the more, his hatchet face as ominous to the full as that of the renegade, while his fingers curled about the trigger, ready for instant action. Solomon, however, still had a bone to pick with Parrish.

“I’d like to know, Colonel Parrish, why you’re wearin’ that ring o’ mine?”

The other laughed shortly, and now the brown fingers rested quietly on the stone.

“A keepsake, John Solomon, a mere keepsake! I——”

He stopped abruptly, and there came a slight cry from Mary Grey behind. Tredgar shifted about so that he could get a view of the doorway without losing sight of the five men in front, and saw the tall figure of a Sayyid, rifle in hand. Solomon whirled, but reassured the alarmed girl with a laugh.

“All werry right, Miss Grey! Come along, Hassan! Are the guards fixed?”

Hassan spoke rapidly in Arabic, and Tredgar saw the khuan before him exchange a glance of swift alarm, but the thin lips of Parrish curved in his disdainful smile. A moment after, Hassan vanished and Solomon rubbed his hands contentedly.

“A bit more, Mr. Tredgar, and we won’t be

needin' of 'elp from outside! Hassan says as 'ow the palace guards an' niggers is took care of, all right an' tight."

"Good," nodded Tredgar. "Lucky piece of work, in case anything goes wrong."

"No, sir, if I may make so bold; it was orders. Luck ain't neither 'ere nor there, I says, if so be as you 'as your eyes open; luck is all a matter o' keepin' your wits about you, as the old gent said when 'e married 'is fourth. Call it Prowidence if you likes to, but not luck; Prowidence, says I, is a werry proper name for it, a name as means something. Now, colonel, I 'eard Mr. Tredgar call ye a fool a bit back; it ain't a nice name to lay to a brother, as the Good Book says, but fools is fools, an' thanks be ye ain't no brother o' mine, for Mr. Tredgar was right, he was. To keep a man here pris'ner five years, atryin' to open the oyster, so to speak——"

Solomon broke off abruptly and stood listening, his head cocked on one side and his mouth open. Tredgar caught a faint sound that penetrated the stone walls—a noise as if wild beasts had suddenly been let loose, and he shuddered.

"Cairn's lost the slaves, John! Give 'em the signal, for God's——"

The brown hands of Parrish suddenly pressed hard on the stone; at the same instant there came a deep sullen roar from without, and the ground shook. Tredgar, flung against Solomon, heard a sharp click and the chamber was in darkness;

realizing that the dynamite had gone off, he staggered up and pulled both triggers of his automatic.

Even as he did so his heart sank, for an answering laugh floated back from Parrish and there was a slight crash. Realizing too late why those brown fingers had been wandering over the stones, he flung himself forward before the reverberation of his automatic had died away; he was brought against the solid wall, and as he fumbled at it desperately, something clicked again and the lights were switched on.

But Parrish and his four aids had vanished.

CHAPTER XX

BATTLE IN THE DARK

“Dang it!” came the mildly irritated voice of Solomon. “They’ve been an’ slipped out by a secret passage! Well, I ’ave me work outside, Mr. Tredgar. Better get the lady safe, then join me.”

And with this he went for the door with startling agility, Tredgar, furious at losing Parrish and more furious at Solomon for the long delay which had caused it, gave up the hope of finding the spring that concealed the hidden door through which the renegade must have fled, and went to the side of Mary Grey, who was leaning against the wall faintly.

“Come, Mary. You aren’t hurt?”

“No, but I’m—I’m afraid that I’m horribly scared, Horizon dear!”

“We’ll see if we can find your own rooms, then, and I’ll leave you there. There’s a force of Turkish and British outside, and you won’t mind, will you?”

“No, Allan. Do you know where your brother is?”

“That’s another thing. I’ll have to find him, somehow.”

They gained the corridor, and now Mary became the guide, for Tredgar had no idea of the direction in which to go, the palace being honeycombed with passages. With that tremendous concussion there had come silence from without, but as they rapidly walked along the corridor that same terrible yell of the slaves broke forth again, followed by a rippling crash of rifle-fire. High and clear and sweet over the confused uproar that ensued sang out the silver note of bugles, thrilling Tredgar strangely.

As they turned a corner, they almost stumbled over a dark silent figure lying on the floor—one of the guards who had been slain. The girl stepped past with a shudder, but Tredgar stopped long enough to tear away the brown *burnous*, as he had come to the council in his white robe and it made too distinguishing a mark in the darkness. He left the man’s rifle, as he now had two automatics.

Reaching a door which Mary declared to be hers, this opinion was confirmed by finding the body of Ahmed in the passage, and Tredgar hurried the girl inside. Her window faced away from the harbour, and as her room was also at the opposite side of the palace, Tredgar drew a deep breath of

relief, for here she would be safe from any stray bullets.

No sign of the conflict could be seen, though there was a reflected glare visible as if something was on fire; but irregular rifle shots were shattering the night, and the wild cries of men rang back from the encircling hills. Tredgar made sure that the heavy doors of the room could be bolted securely, and turned to take Mary Grey in his arms.

“Good-bye, sea-foam girl. Don’t worry if I stay away, but I’ll be back just as soon as I can find Bob and get hold of a guard for this place. Good-bye, dear.”

“Don’t run any foolish risks, Allan. You know perfectly well I’ll be worried to death all the time; but don’t bother about me. You get your brother and help Captain Cairn all you can.”

“Bully for you! Here, you might need this,” and he thrust one of his automatics into her hand. With a last injunction to bar the door, he shut it and waited outside until he heard the bolts shoot home; then revolver in hand, he broke at a run for the nearest exit, having slipped into the brown *burnous*.

As he passed a converging corridor, however, he was stopped by a shout. Turning, he saw one of Parrish’s white-*burnoused* aids running hastily toward him, rifle in hand; at the same instant

the aid saw his mistake, recognizing Tredgar's face under the brown hood, and flung up his weapon.

He was too slow, however; the American fired from his hip, and as the white *burnous* went down in a heap he turned and continued his flight toward the nearest door. He stumbled out at last, beneath the awning at the entrance, and stopped aghast at the sight which met his eyes.

From the hill behind the palace Krogness was sending his searchlight back and forth across the harbour, hills, and buildings, while near the quay two or three of the dhows were burning fiercely, caused, no doubt, by the dynamite explosion, which had also torn away half the broad quay itself.

Between the searchlight and this red glare, El Woda'a was in a fairly brilliant play of light; as Tredgar reached the open air a deeper note boomed from the tongue of rock and something broke among the buildings below in a burst of flame and a circle of death as the shrapnel shredded out.

Little tongues of fire were on the hills and through the town, as the rifles spat their messages. At first it was hard to see the combatants, but a touch of the searchlight brought out the men of the Brotherhood, who seemed to be stubbornly holding the buildings near the harbour, the warehouses, and the supply depots on the opposite side.

Even so, all was confusion; Tredgar caught sight of a horde of the quondam slaves tearing after an Arab a hundred yards distant, and just as they caught him the searchlight flickered away, for which the American was thankful. Over all the horror rose a steady yell of "*Allahu ill' Allah! Allahu ill' Allah!*" and searching for its cause he perceived the dark lines of Turkish soldiery who were hemming in the Senussiyeh.

Tredgar had no idea which way to turn, hesitating to leave the palace unguarded, until he caught sight of half a dozen figures approaching at a run. Springing back into the doorway, he raised his automatic, only to drop it the next instant with a shout of joy and relief.

"Cairn! Cairn!"

Leaping out, he found himself frenziedly shaking hands with the little skipper, and the survivors of the *Spindrif*'s men, who were armed with rifles and were covered with dust and sweat.

"I couldn't hold 'em any longer, by scrag!" stormed the captain. "When they got clear out of hand, that bloody Arab fired the dynamite and the whole bally show blew up. I've been looking for ye, sir; met John a bit ago and he sent us up here to meet ye."

"We've got to keep the slaves out of here," determined Tredgar instantly. "Some of the Senussi officers are probably around here yet,

too. First, have you any idea of where my brother is?"

"'E's hover in one o' them 'ouses, sir," panted an excited man. "Hi 'elped to carry of 'im hover the other dye, sir! Sick, 'e was, but 'e winked hat me like 'e was shammin', sir."

"Good for you! You stand by to guide us there. Captain, why not send up a man to Krogness and get the marines down here to hold the palace."

"Jolly good idea, sir. Davis, lay up to that searchlight on the hill. Give my compliments to Lieutenant Krogness and ask him to send his bloody marines down here to protect the women an' children. That'll do it—they'll be fair wild if they think there are women and children here, Mr. Tredgar!"

"Right you are," laughed the American as Davis sped off into the darkness. "Now, I'd suggest leaving a couple of men to keep the dagos out of here, and we can be off."

"Right-o!" Cairn told off two men to guard the palace entrance. One of the eight *Spindrifft* men had fallen, so that besides Tredgar and Cairn there were but four left to go in search of Number Fifteen. The one who had helped carry Bob Tredgar pointed out the house—a low stone building, six hundred yards away, and about a hundred yards from the harbour.

"There's nothing for it but a dash, by

scrag," sang out the captain. "All ready, men! Go!"

Tredgar laughed like a boy as he ran beside the skipper. The excitement of the thing was in his blood, and a moment later, as the bullets began to sing around them, he emptied his revolver-clip at the Senussiye below with wild delight.

As they swept across the open space beyond the palace, however, a howling mob swept down upon them—a wild mixture of Greek and Italian slaves, bashi-bazouks, and khuan of the order, who had fled down from one of the captured batteries on the rock tongue and were fighting savagely to reach their own lines.

Before the *Spindrift* men could pull up, the fighting, cursing mob was around them, reckless of the bullets that cut through from friend and foe alike. Tredgar attempted to hang on to Cairn but a rush of men broke down on him and he was swept away in the midst of the seething mass.

Now his brown robe proved his salvation, for all around him were others of the Brethren, each one fighting desperately. Tredgar barely had time to slip a fresh clip into his weapon when a brawny Italian was swept against him, stabbing with a vicious knife at every brown robe within reach.

Tredgar sent him down with a blow in the face,

shot a Greek who was jabbing at him with a bayonet, and the Senussiye ranks closed up to meet a line of Turkish soldiery ahead.

Tredgar had lost all track of everything but the fight, for the moment. Filled with the exhilaration of that wildly confused battle, where every man was an enemy, he swept down with the Arabs about him; they struck the soldiery and shattered them, then a new mob of mingled Turks and ex-slaves poured up in a wild charge on the Senussiye defences.

Before the American knew what had happened the rush of men was sweeping him forward, and he found himself shooting, cursing, striking out with the rest. Suddenly he was sobered as if a dash of cold water had been flung over him; for almost in his ear he heard the cool voice of Parrish, directing the defence.

Tredgar raised his automatic, but it was empty, and he flung it away with a curse, glancing about. The searchlight was playing on the hill-fortifications now, and among the houses there was little light; but from somewhere at one side there came a single burst of animal yells, and down on the group of Senussiye swept the horde of slaves.

Tredgar realized his opportunity on the instant, sent Parrish staggering with a savage blow in the face, and flung himself on his enemy.

Something spat fire and the red flame leaped

across his brow; but Tredgar gripped the renegade by the throat, forcing his hood back till the virile face stood out clear in the searchlight that slowly swept across the scene.

Blows rained upon him unheeded, but when Parrish caught sight of his enemy he shoved his automatic into Tredgar's face.

As he did so, however, a hand knocked the weapon away, and Tredgar was aware of a terrible scream that sounded in his ears; while a second brown figure fell on Parrish viciously, and all three were flung back into a doorway in a huddled heap by a surge of the crowd in their rear.

Tredgar lost his grip and staggered up; as he did so a hand seized his and his brother's voice rang in his ears.

“Allan! Thank God!”

There was no time to lose, however; a blow sent Tredgar reeling, and he heard the renegade, cornered in the stone doorway, shouting at his men.

The American leaped, saw his brother spring at Parrish and bear him down, then the door before them crashed inward, and all three men went sprawling together. Allan heard one sickening horrible thud, and Bob's voice sounded out:

“Get the door shut, Allan! I stunned this devil against the wall—we're all right in here till the scrap's over!”

Tredgar swung the broken door in place while the mob surged past outside, then turned to the dark figure nearby.

“Shake hands, Bob, old man! By George, you sure bobbed up at the right time!”

CHAPTER XXI

“IN THE MIDST OF DEATH——”

Silence was upon El Woda'a, but it was not the silence of life.

Over the palace hung the Union Jack, two white-clad marines lounging at the entrance. Among the shattered buildings below were camped the spahis and irregulars, and here flew the Crescent flag—though there was little enough breeze to fly it.

In the harbour lay two or three half-burned hulks, while the arm of the sunken dredge projected above the water like some overflowed gallows.

For two days the spahis had been escorting little squads of brown-clad men out into the desert whence had come faint volley-echoes, and the spahis had returned alone. The ex-slaves had been sent off with what was left of the dhows, and those who could not crowd aboard had been taken over to Massohaw on the *Arethusa*; while from hill-crest and rock-tongue and harbour mouth had come muffled roars and clouds of dust or spouts of

water, telling of how the great dream of Lionel Parrish lay rent asunder and scattered.

While Mary Grey kept her room, the hall of the council of the Senussiyeh was filled to overflowing on this third morning. Along one wall were ranged trim marines, along another, untidy spahis, while seated in chairs on the audience rug were John Solomon, fat and round-eyed, Pasha Reis Abdullah, glittering with gold lace and Orders, and Lieutenant Krogness, very silent and square-jawed.

The naval officer and the Pasha had all but come to blows, two days before, over certain prisoners, for Krogness had no mind to obey the Sultan's firman, and his prisoners had been marched over the hills to the coast and safely sent aboard the *Arethusa*.

Standing ironed between two stalwart marines was Parrish, still in the robe of his Order, still grim and immobile of feature as a man of stone. At one side stood Allan Tredgar and another, whose shaven face revealed the same lean lines of strength, though it was marred and distorted as by long suffering. The triumph of Number Fifteen had come at last.

"No, Colonel Parrish," Solomon was saying mildly, "you'll 'ave no chance to buy your freedom wi' the treasure, me man. In the first place, ye 'aven't got it; and, in the second place, ye don't know who 'as it."

“That man knows,” rejoined the prisoner proudly, glancing at Bob Tredgar.

“No, 'e don't,” retorted Solomon promptly, at which one of the two Americans stared at him in surprise. “'E thinks 'e knows, you mean. Colonel, d'you 'appen to remember a party o' lousy pilgrims what got blowed in 'ere with a leaky dhow about a year ago, just after you come back from the Balkans? Well, that was me an' me friends, so to speak. Ye found as 'ow we was khuan o' your blessed Order, didn't ye? Well, we wasn't. We was lookin' for Mr. R. J. Tredgar 'ere, an' we found 'im. But we couldn't get 'im away—I'll say that for ye.”

Parrish stared straight before him, the brown eyes never wavering from Solomon's face; but under the brown of the sun Tredgar saw his cheeks blanch, and down one prong of the forked beard trickled a drop of blood from a bitten lip.

John Solomon mopped his broad forehead and continued:

“'Owsoever, colonel, I 'ad a bit o' talk wi' the pris'ner, so to speak. The next day, while you was a-showin' two of 'em over the place, the other four was 'ard at work up in them 'ills. Ye see, colonel, Mr. R. J. Tredgar 'e knowed me, an' when I says to tell me where the stuff was, why, 'e up an' tells me.”

“And do you mean to say it's been gone ever since?” demanded Allan Tredgar in amazement. His brother smiled.

“Yes, boy. Solomon was my only hope, and I told him the place. He promised to come back for me some day—but it was a weary wait.”

“I done me best, Mr. Tredgar, but things move slow out 'ere. I says to the Sultan as 'ow I 'ad the stuff, an' would 'e like it? He says as 'ow 'e'd like it extremely, to the extent o' sendin' me various an' sundry decorations, for which I 'ad no use except to 'ock 'em. So I says no; I says 'give me the firman I'm after, and I'll not only send the bloody relics, but I'll wipe out the Senussiyeh down this 'ere way'. 'E says as that's werry good o' me, but the Senussiyeh's too bally strong to monkey with. So we chattered back an' forth, me an' 'im, until you showed up, Mr. Allan Tredgar.

“Then I knowed it was do or die. So I says as 'ow I was a-selling of the stuff to a 'Merican millionaire unless the firman comes. That fetched 'im, an' when I told what I'd been finding about this 'ere place, 'e gets 'oppin' mad. After some delay I got 'old o' Leftenant Krogness 'ere, an' we co-operates in a 'urry, so to speak. So the Porte 'as the treasure, colonel, and we 'as you. Quite a fair exchange, I says!”

“I think,” interposed the Pasha in his suave polite English—“I think we will take Colonel Parrish with us, Solomon Pasha. I have no doubt he would be welcomed at the Golden Horn,” he added with a smile—“very gladly welcomed indeed!”

The quiet smile of the Pasha matched in cruelty that of Parrish himself; but the renegade was not smiling. He stood straight and erect, but his face was now grey beneath its tan, and the drip of red on his beard slowly filled and slid to the stones below, where it spread out large and round.

“No,” and Solomon shook his head gravely. “I wouldn’t waste time afetching of ’im back, Pasha; at least, not to Constantinople. No, take ’im to Tripoli or Tunis, I says, and let ’im go free.”

Before the consternation created by this amazing speech could find expression, Parrish took a step forward, horror in his eyes, his manacled hands before his face. Suddenly he found his voice.

“No! Shoot me if you will—but not that!”

“Fetched you, eh?” and Solomon rubbed his pudgy hands and smiled effulgently. “You wouldn’t like to go before the Grand Master, eh? Well, colonel, I’ll ave’ pity on ye; mercy is a good thing, says I, in its proper place, a werry good thing.”

He paused, leaning forward and gazing curiously at the renegade, Parrish had suddenly drawn himself up, his splendid figure erect and firm; and Tredgar wondered at the light which shone in Solomon’s eyes, while the Pasha nodded as if amused.

“So, I thought as ’ow it wasn’t natural, so to

“speak, for a man o’ your stamp to put up ’is ’ands like that! Werry good, colonel; we’ll bury ye all shipshape an’ proper. Take ’im back to ’is room, me men; let the poor beggar die in peace, says I.”

Tredgar started forward, but his brother laid a restraining hand on his arm.

Captain Cairn, however, was not reluctant to express himself. With a single glance of amazement at the two marines who had started off, he stepped out, furiously angry.

“I’d thank ye to explain this farce, John Solomon. By scrag, I’ve no cause to love this Parrish, but I’m damned if I’ll see him tortured by a set of bloody——”

“Now, now, cap’n!” Solomon’s voice was mildly reproofing, and the Pasha smiled broadly; but there was a brooding horror in the eyes of Krogness. “All werry nice in its place; but first, this ain’t the place, and second, a man o’ your discernment, so to say, ought to know farce from tragedy. Colonel Parrish ’as been an’ put a bit o’ poison in ’is mouth, and ’e’ll be dead in ten minutes; all o’ which is werry much as it should be, I says.”

Solomon quietly took out his plug and began to whittle. Captain Cairn stared at him for a instant, then turned away and left the hall, his face working; Allan Tredgar looked up at his brother and the latter nodded.

“The game was up for him, Allan boy, and it’s for the best. Now get along out of this; the *Arethusa* gets back from Massowah to-night, and thank God we’re done with it all!”

An hour later, Allan Tredgar and Mary Grey were seated beneath the awning at the entrance, watching the two regiments file off into the desert. Their work was done, and the Pasha and his officers, with the camel corps, had already left.

“A few days more, sea-foam girl, and we’ll be in Berbera!” said Tredgar softly, looking into the brown eyes. “And then——”

“Then you’ll have to interview dad, Horizon, and I wish you joy of the job!” she laughed.

As the sand crunched behind them, Tredgar turned to see John Solomon whistling loudly and mopping his red face.

“Ah! Beggin’ your pardon, Mr. Tredgar, I’d like to say as ’ow me men are raising of the *Spindrifft*. No, no salvage, sir; I’m well paid by the Padishah for this work, an’ I’d be proud to make you a little present o’ the yacht for the occasion, so to speak. Werry ’appy indeed, sir and missus both; in the midst o’ death, as the Bood Gook says, we’re in life, or words to that effect, an’ if I might make so bold as to wish you all ’appiness—you see, sir, I ’aven’t ’ad the pleasure o’ meeting the lady, so to——”

“You confounded old rogue!” laughed Tredgar, rising and taking the pudgy hand. “Mary Grey, this is John Solomon, who’ll have a little job to perform when we get to Berbera!”

THE END

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